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DIANA, LADY LYLE BY W. HEPWORTH DIXON
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 2.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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WILLIAM LLOYD GIBBS, M.A., D.D.,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Vol. II.

DIANA, LADY LYLE.

BY

WILLIAM HEPWORTH DIXON.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1877.

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DIANA, LADY LYLE

WILLIAM HERBERT DIXON

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1877

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DIANA, LADY LYLE.

BOOK VII.

A T H O M E.

PERIOD, 1869.

CHAPTER I.

Castle Lyle.

A RUGGED nose of land, lit up with the sunshine of a clear May morning, juts out into the waters of the German Ocean from a high and windy sweep of wold. This nose of land starts up into a nab or peak, on which stands a feudal edifice, beetling on one side over the surging waves, and on the other side sloping gently towards a fishing village on the beach. A line of broken coast runs north and south; here walls of grit and angles of coralline; there faces of chalk surmounted by hummocks of grass and copse. Dark moors lie inland, cut by ravines, through which rivulets race and sparkle. Outward, rolls that sea of storms which from the time of Danish jarl and Saxon prince has been the terror of all mariners except the sea-dogs of the northern coasts. This nab is in the diocese of St. Oswald, in the county of York. The edifice on the nab is Castle Lyle, and the fishing village on the beach is called Port Lyle.

Seen by passing vessels in the distance the rocky nab and feudal pile appear to be one mass. The rock is coralline grit, the walls and towers are coralline grit. But as vessels come nearer land, some gleams of sky are seen through the seeming wall of rock, showing that perched on that nab is a work of man's hands, and that some part of this work has been riven by time and ruined by war. There, on the right, stands a round corner tower, roofless and rent, of which the crypt alone remains entire. This pile, called Rupert's tower, connects with the main edifice by the sky lines and finials of a Gothic chapel. Then comes the flanked and embattled gateway, still the state entrance as of old: and to the left runs a high curtain of masonry, pierced by many windows, some mere crennels of defence, others embayed and mulioned; showing that the original pile, a mass of towers and donjons, had been occupied at a later period by a softer race. Still farther to the left, lie ruins of a second corner tower, called by the name of Cromwell. After a defence, which filled the trenches with Cromwell's men, it fell athwart the fosse, making ground for a shrubbery of laurels and rhododendrons. Between this shrubbery and the dwelling-rooms of the castle lies a pretty garden, and beyond it spreads a wild and intricate copse. This copse runs over the bluff and down the slopes, serving the garden on that side for a screen and fence. A flagstaff rises from a knoll in the garden, and a hammock swings from the branch of a giant elm.

Some persons used to yachting seem to live at Castle Lyle.

The house part of the pile and the embattled

entrance are intact; with traces here and there of recent mischief in the slits and windows; yet reporting faithfully, on the whole, of excellent Tudor work; the old Norman fortalice having been tamed to domestic use a few years after the affair at Bosworth Field. The great hall is full of relics; old banners torn from Saladin's lancers; helmets and halberts gathered on the field at Agincourt; boars' heads, stags' antlers, coats of arms and men in mail. Between these trophies hang a series of family portraits, chiefly of knights in steel and dames in slashed sleeves; and among these personal treasures hang some noble samples of the Roman and Venetian schools.

One figure occupies a central place, and outshines all the rest; a paladin in greaves and gauntlets, with casque and chain mail all in silver gilt; holding a battle-axe in his upraised hand. This hero is Sir Leonard, the Crusader, who rode by the side of Lion Heart, and fell in the great breach at Ascalon. Beside his pedestal lies a broken drum.

Some little boy must live at Castle Lyle.

Doors open on this hall from every side. A central door on the right leads into a covered way or cloister, with a court, now green with grass. One end of this covered way goes to the private entrance and the general offices; the other to a Gothic chapel, which recalls the Temple church. Tablets streak the walls, and effigies strew the floor. No one is buried in this chapel save the Lyles. Here, say the family legends, since the days of Sire de l'Isle, the members of his race have taken up their rest. Returning to the hall one finds a similar doorway on the left, opening into rooms of state—dining-room, library, and drawing-

room. These rooms of state are hung with tapestries and pictures, and are shown to strangers as a county sight. One door in this great hall opens on a man's cabinet, another on a lady's boudoir and adjoining bed-room. Each connects in the rear with each other, and with a morning-room ending in a lady's bower, occupying the first tier of a square turret. The morning-room contains a grand piano, and a painter's easel, and is hung with sketches from the Nile, the Himalayas, and the Southern Seas. A bay-window in the bower gives on the shrubbery and garden. Within, the bower is plain but rich. The walls are clothed in silk, of pink and white plaits, caught up in the centre by knots of gold. An ottoman runs round the room. The only ornament is a bronze flower-stand from Pompeii, and in that bronze a single red rose.

Descending from the lady's bower by a spiral stone stair, we light on a picturesque, uneven garden, trimmed in the natural English style, with grass and shrubs, and rounded banks of flowers. This garden leans on the masses of fractured and fallen masonry, which Cromwell's miners threw into the fosse, and art has hinted into beauty by a veil of laurels and rhododendrons. Nestling under the square tower, and facing towards the south, this private garden is covered by a spur of ancient wall from the Russian pestilence, known as the East wind. In every sunny nook a rose-tree blooms. The time is May-day, yet roses are already scenting the air round Castle Lyle. From the slight mound, on which the flag-staff springs, the view runs over sea and coast. A yacht lies in the offing, and a murmur from the water rises up the cliff; a swell of the advancing, and a rasp of the retreating

tides. The world is all at peace. A note, a tender note, plaintive and beautiful, comes from a piano in the morning-room.

A lady, who is evidently an artist, lives at Castle Lyle.

CHAPTER II.

Service.

"RUN to the flag-staff, Joe, while I arrange the swing," cries Bessie, tripping from the house, followed by her young man, humming his morning hymn "Du dah."

"All serene," Joe answers, dropping his sing-song of the "bob-tail nag," with a last appeal to bet something—even a kiss—on the bay.

Bent on her own work, Bessie pulls out the swing, ties the rope, dusts the seat, and then calls out,—

"See anything of Sir Leonard?"

"Nay, not yet," Joe bawls in a comic whisper, as he leaps down the grassy bank on which the flag-staff stands.

"Sun blinks in one's eyes this morning, Bess," he chirps, coming near the girl, "it's worse nor those summer days in Honeyloo."

"In what, Joe?"

"Honeyloo; among them sandvitges. Pretty sandvitges they was! Only bread you have grows on trees, and you can't get Yorkshire ham for love nor money."

"So you tried with love and money?"

"Coom, Bess. All serene. Bet on the bay? Don't

bait that trap to catch a weasel. We're all Yorkshire, lass. I ain't a-trying to sell thee a horse."

"You were out late, Joe? It was long past ten when you came in. You were at Port Lyle?"

Joe shirks the question, but he helps her to arrange the swing, hums at his favourite music, and, on catching an opportunity, slides his arm round her waist.

"No tales out of the stable. Fact was, I met a friend in Port Lyle."

"Male friend or female friend?"

"There we are again! Jealous and inquiring, Bess?"

"Male friend or female friend? If you don't speak, I'll think the worst."

"It was a sort of man; more like a fish; a cod's head on a grampus. Ever saw a grampus?"

"So you went to drink with that cod's head?"

"Consider, Bess. We hadn't seen each other for so long. We couldn't help having a pot."

"Joe, I'm not jealous, and I'm not inquiring. But when a young woman's silly enough to walk with a young man, it's her bounden duty to know what he's doing when he's out of sight. You were drinking at Port Lyle?"

"Tell thee something, Bess. One day, thee shall be landlady of that Lyle Arms."

"You'd swallow up all my beer, and use up all my chalk. I'm not particular, Joe, not in the least; but who was your friend? what is his name? where does he come from? what does he want?"

"I ain't a-doing my catechism."

"Answer me. What would you do if I got angry?"

"All serene. Pull up my team and wait. Thee ain't a-going to be cross?"

"Hum! That depends. You're growing fond of company."

"Of thine, my lass."

"I don't see that; I mean of cards and drink. Tell me now, Who's your friend that you have not seen for so long?"

"Ah, let me see. One forgets so many things. I said it was a long time since we met."

"So long you don't recollect his name?"

"Dear me—I rather think he ain't got no name. Some folks ain't got no names. There's one chap they call 'You-Sir,' and another chap they call 'You-There.' My friend is one of that sort—one of the You-Sirs."

"And you don't know what he wants?"

"Pity he never mentioned it; he didn't guess that any lady cared. If he'd only a-guessed——"

"Don't be a fool, Joe; not if you can help it. What did he *do*?"

"Played poker; lost two pots o' beer."

"Did he drink any of that beer?"

"No, Bess; he's a fool. He drank whisky—what he called his schnapps."

"What did he *say*?"

"Nothing. He only axed about the castle and the garden, and about Sir Leonard and my lady, and about the pictures and the men in armour—all that sort o' stuff; just what every stranger axes in these parts."

"Never named the election?"

"No, I told him all about that; how the Duke will

be here to-day, and how the bands will play, and the sheriff ride on horseback, and how we shall have a feast, and how there will be lots of fun, and plenty of drink."

"Told him all that? And what did he tell you?"

"He lost two games; ordered two pots; and told the lad to score 'em."

"Joe, that fellow is a spy."

"A spy, Bess?"

"Yes, a spy. He's a Radical, or something bad. He's come to pick up what he can, to see who's who, and learn what's what, and sell our master to the other side."

"Sell Sir Leonard! I'll go and thrash him. Now I think of him, I hardly like the chap. A cod's head ain't a nice ornament on a man's shoulders. Are you sure he's come to play Sir Leonard tricks?"

"One can't be sure, Joe; but my father used to tell me that when a Yorkshire lad don't know, he ought to suspect. I don't know, and I suspect he means no good."

"I'll pound him into porridge."

"Look again, Joe; see if they're coming. They've been away two hours."

The *Foam* is lying in the road; idly at anchor on the calm and murmuring sea. A gig is putting from the yacht; a tall young man, in yachting costume, sitting in the stern, ruling the tiller, with a boy of six or seven years standing at his side.

"There they come," cries Joe; "in twenty minutes they'll be back."

"Since you don't mind telling strangers, perhaps you won't mind telling me," says Bessie, when Joe

rejoins her in the garden, near the window of my lady's bower, "about this coming of the Duke and the other gentlemen? My lady, as I fancy, hardly knows her mind. Does Sir Leonard know his mind?"

"Not yet."

"Does he ever ask your opinion, Joe?"

"Sir Leonard knows my opinion, Bess. I'm always for a fight coming off, and going in to win."

"You think Sir Leonard ought to stand?"

"I say he must. That's how I put it to him: 'Master, we've got to do it; here's a gate as can't be leapt or opened. Smash through it; break it down!'"

"Oh, if *you* say he must, he must. But why do you say he must?"

"Because he's Yorkshire and a Lyle. Parliament can't do without Yorkshire, and Yorkshire can't do without Lyle. Fancy a Doncaster week without a Leger; that's what a Parliament session would be without a Lyle. The world would be upset. That's why we must."

"When is it coming on, Joe?"

"Don't know. Duke himself don't know. Some time in the summer; but we have to enter and declare. You can't run a blind horse for the county."

"Shall we live in London when Sir Leonard is in Parliament?"

"That's what you're after, is it? eh, Miss Minx? Look here, Bess, I ain't a-going to stand it, mind. No flirting with the Duke's gentleman. If I catch him at it again——"

"Again, Mister Impudence! What do you mean?"

"Coom, all serene, Bess. Say no more. Wink's as good as a word, a stopper good as a blow." The

lad squares at an imaginary foe, feigning a rap on the nose, and letting his arm drop gently, smiling with the air of a fellow who is certain of his game.

"A nice young man you are, to lift your hand against a girl."

"Coom, Bess, don't say that. I never raised no arm against a woman, and I ain't a-going to begin it now. But London's a bad place; we were there only six weeks, and I had fifteen fights. There are so many tall young chaps in braid and buttons."

"Never mind those tall young men."

"I won't, if thee don't, Bess; they'll turn thy head."

"Which way? You think they'll turn it from Joe? And perhaps they may——Hush!"

A bar of music floats into the garden; low and plaintive music, like the lullaby of some unknown people, touched with so light a hand, and in so slow a time, as to suggest a psalm.

"That is my lady, Joe; God bless her!"

Joe takes off his cap, clasps his two hands, and listens to the strain.

"Amen to that," he whispers. "I'm not given to praying, Bessie, but I say amen to that."

They lean towards the window from which the music came, but the note is not renewed. Some one has crossed the room and taken the piano on her way. It answered like a pulse.

"I like you, Joe," says Bessie, looking round, and putting her hand in his with a sweet smile.

CHAPTER III.

The Garden.

"HEAR some one in the copse, Joe?"

"No, lass; nothing but the wind, and not much wind. Look at the flag."

"I'm glad you feel so warm for Lady Lyle."

"We're Yorkshire, Bess, and she's Virginian; but we'll tell the truth, lass, even if York Minster falls. It ain't easy to beat Yorkshire; is it?"

"I should think not."

"Most of all in pretty faces?"

"Hem! That's personal. Don't ask me, Joe."

"Barring present company, tell me where to find a face like Lady Lyle's? All Doncaster on Leger day won't take the shine out o' Lady Lyle."

"Nor show a better heart or lady nobler bred."

"If any fellow says his mistress is as good as mine, I'd like to see him in that croft."

"You'd knock him down?"

"Plop! like a skittle."

"Kiss me, Joe. No, fie, for shame; not yet. You tall young chaps will turn my head."

"Bessie, I'd fight for thee with all the chaps in Grosvenor Square."

"And for my lady, too?"

"Aye, for my lady, too."

"And for Sir Leonard also?"

"Lass, Sir Leonard does all that himself. Once I fought him, and he whopt me. Since that morning he's always had to fight for me."

"Look out! they must be near."

Joe skips up the bank to the signal station, followed by the lady's-maid, who seems to hang about him not displeased, in spite of the lingering smell of beer.

A low hiss is heard; a woman's face peeps out from a parting in the coppice. Her head is wrapt in a scarlet shawl, and under this scarlet shawl gleam a pair of wild, suspicious eyes—eyes that one only sees in those untamed races of mankind in which a remnant of the beast of prey still lingers. After looking round, she creeps from the bush into open day; a lithe and gaudy figure, with a bare brown leg, and dusky arms and bosom, clothed in a garb which is, and yet is not, like that of a race-course gipsy and a Capriote fish-wife. A short red kirtle falls an inch or two below the knee. A dirty white chemisette, worn loose and puffy, is but half imprisoned by a green boddice, cut below the shoulder blades, so as to throw up a well-shaped neck and ample bust. A number of brass and copper rings on the third finger, and a coil of tawdry beads round the throat, complete a costume which is African rather than Oriental, and suggests the idea of a cotton field in Alabama rather than a coral reef in the Sicilies. Yet, in the absence of a better model, the lithe and jaunty figure might do duty in the artist's studio for Masaniello's bride.

After peering to the right and left, and seeing that the man and woman at the flag-staff are engaged in their own business, she glides to the parting in the copse from which she came, looks into it, and hisses—

“S . . . imon!”

“O. K? Coasht clear?” a voice responds from the thicket. “Coasht all clear, Taab?”

“Hish! Step softly, look around,” replies the dusky

woman, beckoning to a squat and grisly man, who seems by his uneasy motion to be slightly tipsy; "look at him. Is he the lout?"

But Simon, wobbling out of those briars into the open garden, shakes his side and smoothes his whip, paying little or no attention to what she says. He stares about him with a reckless, imbecile smile. "Shweet place! Vat old shtone—old tree! Dat Rupert tower, he shtand; dat Cromwell tower, he down; all gone to shleep; dree hundred years ashleep! Vat he calls him? Cashtel Lyle? Nice name; nice place; all gone to shleep! Old men in armour; dead bodies in chapel! Vat a shweet place! Shimon Shlockk, hev a drink."

Simon pulls out a flask of whisky, big enough to hold a quart, and puts the delirium to his lips. Tab glides to him, and hisses.

"S . . . tay! Keep sober."

Simon kicks her on the shin, curses her eyes and limbs, and takes a second pull. With the cowed face and flashing eyes of a wild cat, she shrinks before her master's blow; but after dodging round a tree in fear of another kick, she grows uneasy at a delay which is exposing them to danger of discovery and expulsion, and in a meeker and more wheedling manner, begs him to look towards the signalling point, and nod whether that is the lout to whom he lost his pots of beer.

"Dat fool," he answers slowly; "all sherene; all du, dah."

"S . . . tand back; they're coming down."

"Dey talk, Taab—talk. He fool, dat all sherene. Cash vat he shay."

Joe jumps down the grassy slope, while Bessie trips by the easier track. They come round towards the swing.

"A straight tip would make you and me happy, Joe? What do you mean by a straight tip making you and me happy?"

"Yorkshire, and not understand a straight tip!" cries Joe. "Don't try it on too much. Aye, Bess, if we'd a straight tip for the Derby, we might bag a trifle of fifty pounds."

"How would that make you and me happy? Tell me that, Joe."

"Why, Bess, we'd buy a pianny, and be married in a month."

"You don't mean what you say?"

"Don't I, my lass? Thee shall have a pianny, like my lady. I'll drink my pot o' beer at home, and thee shall play for me and Master Frank."

"Play what, Joe?"

Joe takes her by the hand merrily, and runs her into the side door, out of which they first came out, singing, as he pulls her in—

"Du, dah, deh,
I'll put my money on the bob-tail nag,
Somebody bet on the bay."

As soon as they are gone, the man called Simon, forcing his head out of the coppice, asks his partner, "Vat he shay?"

"Wants a straight tip," Tab answers curtly, seeing no business in such words.

"Straight tip! Vat kind? Foot-race, row-match, rat-fight?"

"Hish, Simon; some one comes."

"Vat come? not sheriff?"

"Simon, I know a man's tread from a detective's slouch. A child's laugh, too? Step back; these grounds are private. If they catch us, we are trespassers, and shall be asked to give account of who we are and what we want. Dip into the copse; lie still, and wait. I'll scan the party close."

Tab has only time to speak, before a child runs through an avenue in the coppice, followed by a tall young man in yachting uniform, who is laughing merrily at the urchin as he scrambles up the grassy knoll to the signal-station.

"First in!" pants the child; "first in, papa!"

"Won, Frank, by a length! You're quite a monster. Only seven years old, and beating your own father! What will you do at ten?"

"I won the race, and have my choice."

"Then have a swing, Frank. Here's the hammock, ready fixed. Jump up."

"A sail in the yacht, too," crows the youngster, climbing to the swing.

"Bravo!" cries Leonard, giving him a push that flings him high as the branch into which the hooks are driven. "There, swing away!"

Leaning on a bench, watching the sunburnt little lad, he thinks of the happy days when he was far away, with nobody on earth to please, except his wife and child. How easily they were pleased! How merrily sped the days! Here, he is pestered with these public duties. Only three months in England—hardly six weeks at Castle Lyle—and the packs of agents, canvassers, and committees, are on him! What is he to do? An hour hence all the county will expect his

answer. Hang the county! Why should he become the colleague of St. Leger? What is Parliament to him, who loves to read, and yacht about, and be with Di? He shrinks from every project that would take him from her side. She is his soul. When he is near to Di, he feels so light, so strong! And now they want him to give up her society for politics—to renounce his days of travel and his nights of study—for the company of paid advocates in committee-rooms, and rival spouters in the House! Yet they mean well and kindly by him. Lots of men would jump at what the county offers him. How active Lamber is! The sheriff too! And then to think of the old Duke—prevented by his coronet from interfering in elections, yet moving heaven and earth to gain supporters, and to bring him in! Dear old granddad! How fond he is of Di! But where's the man who is not fond of Di? Ah, there she is!

A bar of music floats into the garden through the open doorway of the lady's bower.

"Mamma!" cries Frank, slipping from his perch and tearing in through that open door.

Sir Leonard listens, and the note seems sad.

"She shall be merrier; why, is it our wedding-day—her birthday, and my bridal-day. Dear Di! She cannot bury that lost cause. Her father speaks to her from the grave. He bade her love her country as she loved her soul. Since that black day, on which we heard of Lee's surrender, she has had a new care on her mind. It was the day we heard of Mary's death, when she put up her arms to me, and, like a wayward child, asked to be taken out of the world. She never speaks about it now. She dares not trust her tongue.

Some day she will be calmer, and will then confide to me her silent woe. That note again! I must go in. Where is my rose? Here's one: a beauty! No; a shade too dark. Here's just her tint. Her tint? As if any tint were worthy of her! No flower that ever grew could match the freshness of her cheek."

CHAPTER IV.

Simon Slokk.

"S . . . IMON!" whispers Tab, on stealing from her cover in the copse. "Here's something odd."

"Some dings to pick up?" inquires her master, looking round.

"Not much ——." She pauses in her speech, and looks at Simon wistfully, trying to find out whether he suspects the truth. Although she lives with him, and thinks herself his wife, she has to guess at what is passing in his mind. A question brings a scowl, a remonstrance is rewarded by a kick. Like a whelp, she has to crouch and fawn, where other females would be apt to rave and fight. Tab has been whipped and beaten to the earth. Eyeing him furtively, she wonders whether Simon suspects anything. But she dares not ask. She wonders whether he knows the name of either that lout in livery or that gentleman in yachting costume. But she has to watch his mood, for Simon, being a white man and a philosopher, will not have his plans disturbed by savages who can neither read nor write. He trusts her eyes, but not her brain; for she is quick of sense, quick by her origin, quicker by her habits. Eye of lynx and ear of antelope are joined in Tab. A pantheress is not armed with a more stealthy

foot than Tab. But Simon, using her good qualities for his profit, never tells her any of his secrets till the moment comes when he wants her to carry out his schemes.

To wit, he has never told her why he followed Diana to Niagara Falls, or why he asked such questions about her in New York. Tab was jealous of her cousin's blue eyes. Her own are dark, and white men like blue eyes in women. When they came to England, he used to bother people about Dinah; going up and down in gaffs and drinking-bars to find her; but his search for her was fruitless, and of late it has been dropped. Dinah is dead to them, and jealousy cannot thrive on empty space.

Simon is playing his last cards. If such a man could fall into despair, he would be justified in feeling desperate. He has tried both worlds, without being able to make them meet. Since quitting Riverside, he has followed with Tab's assistance many trades. He has been a spy, a suttler, a billiard-marker, and an Indian agent. He has prospected mines and opened whisky-bars. He tried to find Diana in the hope of selling her the papers, and avenging his indignities on his old employer. Once he caught sight of her at Niagara; his fear prevented him from acting boldly; and then she melted from his sight. He followed her, as he fancied, to the mines, but she was nowhere to be found. He had to seek his schnapps elsewhere. So long as war lasted he could live. He knew the ins and outs of the Virginian frontier like a scout. Acting as a spy, he sold his scraps of news with strict impartiality to either General Grant or General Lee. When peace came he was put to serious shifts. At one

time poker offered him a living; but he gave it up on a Sydney duck threatening to shoot him if he played again. He could not deal without cheating, and the Sydney duck, a greater sinner than himself, detected Tab in the act of passing him a sign. Had she been a man that Sydney duck would have shot her; seeing she was only a woman, he rose from the table, and knife in hand, gave his antagonist warning never to hold another card, at least in the neighbourhood of Viper Flat.

Simon and Tab then left the place; Tab believing herself a married woman. Simon at times allowed—at other times denied—the fact; asserting that he had a former wife alive, and that this former wife was starving at Viper Flat. Since then they have been wanderers of the earth; speculators, vagabonds, fortune-tellers, card-sharpers. They have raised money on false pretences. They have got into debt, and bolted from a hundred places. Once, in New York, they made a great hit, and lived in clover for a year; but that confounded Cherokee doctor, otherwise General Cridge, had found them out. They had to bolt.

They sailed for England; not in search of Diana, for the death of George and the ruin of his estate appeared to Simon to have eaten all the value out of his family papers; but to save their carcasses from the Tombs. They came out openly as show-man and victim, rogue and cheat.

Tab played the part of a runaway slave, who had escaped from cruel bondage into the freedom of Clapham Rise. Simon was the cruel but converted overseer. At first Tab was a great success; sympathy and sixpences poured in; schools and congregations

vied with each other in caressing her. But at the end of six months an unlucky ship from Senegal brought a blacker and uglier sample of Christian virtue to Clapham Rise.

Tab had to work the provinces; first in the chapel, afterwards on the racecourse. A good mimic, Tab sang and capered to the lawn at Ascot and under the trees at Goodwood. But the ring is narrow, and the pastime of racing needs new singers and new songs.

Simon invented mines and promised bonanzas. Now and then he got his fingers into some one's pocket, but the money paid to him by day was usually lost by him in gambling slums at night. His last invention is the Mixed Felicity Company; a society (limited) for marrying all the black women to white men, all the white women to black men. A financial agent in St. Mary Axe has offered to float the Company, and pay him five hundred dollars as promoter on his bringing a list of five directors, one of whom, the chairman, must be a baronet and a county member. Four of his five directors Simon can lay his hands on easily: an Irish barrister, to do the speeches; Hon. Judge Capper of New Jersey; and two eminent actors out of elbows and engagements. But he lacks a fifth. Where is he to find a baronet who is also a county member?

Fortune has been rather hard on Simon lately. Only a week ago he had a misunderstanding with a publican at York. A fellow, having no respect for genius, called him a swindler, and set the police at him. He bolted for Harrogate, where he became suspicious that an officer was watching him on another and more serious charge.

Tab first saw this officer in the street; and scenting danger, they made tracks for the coast, striking the sea near Port Lyle, without an inkling as to who were, and who were not, the occupants of Castle Lyle.

Tab is more or less aware of how they stand. But many things are dark to her. She never knew why Simon sent that portrait to Diana. Of the private papers she has never heard a word. More than once she has seen them by chance, but being unable to read, has never suspected them of relating to persons and events at Riverside.

Simon has been up a tree many times, but seldom higher up than in his present plight. His coin is spent. Every article that would stand for money has been pledged. There is a score to pay. More than one officer is on his track. But with the genius of his order, he has caught from Joe's chatter a ray of hope. Here is a baronet, a young man, going into Parliament. If Simon could but see that happy man, he might point out to him the advantage of appearing in Parliament as the chief of a great moral association, appealing to all the widest interests and the noblest sympathies of mankind. If that young baronet, now going into Parliament, were booked as chairman of the Mixed Felicity Company (Limited), the boss in St. Mary Axe would stump up the five hundred dollars, and Simon would be saved.

Tab's eyes are quicker than her master's. "S...imon!" she whispers him, her eyes fixed steadily on the open door-way leading from the lady's bower into the garden—"back into the copse—he comes—leave me to scout."

CHAPTER V.

At Home.

"THIS way!" shouts Frank, sallying from the house and rattling up the slope towards the flag-staff.

Leonard and Lady Lyle come out from the feudal stronghold into their quaint and picturesque garden, hand locked in hand; she with his red rose in her bosom; more like boy and girl in their first days of courtship than two married persons who have spent eight years in each other's company. Were it possible for love to droop and sicken, they have given it every chance. If it were true, as many an adage lays it down, that the mere fact of being much together has a tendency to lessen either man's respect for woman or woman's respect for man, Leonard and Diana ought to have a poor opinion of each other now. With the exception of those months when Leonard, in his round of duty as a soldier, paid his visit to Yarkand, they have never passed one day apart. A day! They have hardly passed an hour. For eight years they have lived from day to day within each other's sight. Through sun and shade, by sea and shore, they have been always side by side and hand in hand; as close in action as the two arms of one body, and with hardly more sense of separateness than may belong to the two eyes in one head.

In outward aspect, as a picture in that garden, what a brave and bonny pair they are; examples on the highest line, and in a picturesque situation, of an English gentleman and his wife!

At twenty-nine, Leonard is in the flower of his

early manhood, not in figure only but in heart and mind. His figure, always straight and tall, has settled into form; his youthful pliancy of limb having rounded into manly grace and hardened into manly strength. His beard is darker, and his cheek more bronzed than ever. Black and shiny curls crisp round his neck and cluster on his brow; a heritage, he says, from a cavalier ancestor, who had his love-locks frizzed so much, in order to vex the crop-ears, that the cavalier twist has never since got out of the family mop. His eyes were always bold, and time and service have not dimmed their light. Dressed in his yachting blue, tricked out with gold bands and buttons, Leonard is a handsome and striking man; calm, patient, and resolved; the very comrade you would choose to stand beside you in a storm at sea, or in a fight on shore.

Diana is less changed than Leonard. Sun and sea have touched her also, but with lingering and regretful hand. At twenty-six, she is the perfect flower. Her face is fairer than before. A happy woman is always fairer in her married, than in her maiden days. Love is the great beautifier, and Diana's heart is fed on love. The blue is deeper in her eye, the expression quicker in her mouth. The coronal of tawny gold is thicker, and it may be darker; but the sunshine lingers in it, playfully, fondly, in a manner to have filled a painter like Giorgione with delight. On her whole countenance lies an arch and tender smile, the charm of which is rather heightened than abated by occasional shades of gloom, just as a fair landscape, lying in the sun, is quickened into more ideal beauty by the shadows cast from a passing cloud.

In each, there is that air of ripening life which

comes of days well spent and issues brought to flower and fruit. You see no trace of idle hours, of wasted energies, or blighted hopes. All goes on well with them, for every moment has its duty and its aim; not fixed and governed by external rules, but following from an inward principle of growth. In the first weeks of their wedded life, they set their faces towards a certain point. No formal choice was made, no aim prescribed in words. It was a movement in their minds, unfelt except in the result, each acting on the other as a silent power, setting the whole in motion with a sweet, seducing violence, like the uniting forces in the system of a double-star. The end was culture—culture of themselves. They wished to have some knowledge of the highest things. In books, in art, in men, they sought this knowledge, but their fields were chiefly books and arts. They have succeeded fairly well; seen much; read much; thought much. Nature is to them an open book, and many of its pages are familiar to their eyes. They know the earth by sea and land. They have out-watched Orion and have slept beneath the Southern Cross. Courts and camps are free to them, and they have looked on savages in tent and prow. But they are still as eager in the chase as ever, for their culture of the mind is all an aliment of love.

No cloud has ever passed between the man and wife. If Leonard has his worries, they have no relation to his wife. Some rent has been unpaid; some bargain has been missed; Lamber has committed some mistake; a school-friend has been ruined; or a cliff has fallen down near Castle Lyle. It is always something out of the innermost circle of his heart. So with

Diana, but in less degree. So far as Leonard is concerned, her fancies are at rest. He loves her; she loves him! Ten times a-day these words are on her lips, welling up warm and wholesome from her heart. He trusts her; she trusts him! At times, this sentence gives her pause, and passes in a cloudlet to her brow. And then, she puts it off, as a mere puzzle, like some futile wrangle in the schools. Feeling her heart so full of love, what is a formal and official duty—even if there be a formal and official duty—in the case of such a man and such a wife?

The burthen on her conscience is her own; a weight which she would gladly share with him, if she were only free to tell him all. She is not free, and never may be free. Such hope as she has nursed, and it has been but faint at best, that Mary Cridge's message, to be given to her when she was twenty-six, might open out a way, is dashed. This morning she is twenty-six. This morning's post brought her an envelope from General Cridge, who is in England on political business, enclosing Mary's note. Written on a slip of paper no broader than a ribbon, this note, having neither date nor signature, contained these words, and nothing more:

"Silence for the past; hope for the future. Hold to that which is between us; first for her sake, next for my sake, most of all for thy son's sake. I am sinking to my rest; and I shall bear thy pledge into another world."

And that was all. Diana read the words, read them again and again, and then a dozen times, till

they were burnt into her brain. Her case of conscience was returned to her; the only court in which it could be heard was closed.

While she was pondering, Frank came bounding in. "For *his* sake, Mary?" she exclaimed in a deep undertone. "For his sake, yes."

Crushing the slip of paper in her hand, she laid the pellet on the fire, saying slowly, as if speaking to some spirit in the air: "So, Mary, let the thing that is between us rest."

Yes; if the thing will rest, it shall. But if it will not rest? She knows her course. If the thing comes to her—meeting her fairly in the face—the lower duty must give way. She will accept the peril, announce the truth, and throw herself on Leonard's love.

Her mind is clear; her heart at peace.

CHAPTER VI.

To be or not?

"AND is it true that General Cridge is coming?" she inquires.

"Yes, Di; so says his Grace. His Excellency is a great man; on the wrong side, of course: but as a soldier, no man stands higher than General Cridge. He comes to England as American Commissioner, to see what can be done about that luckless Alabama scrape. For public reasons, we are treating him with great distinction. He is staying with the Duke, who carries him about the county, and will bring him on to us."

"His Excellency is a friend of mine, Leonard, a very old and very dear friend of mine: I should like

him to feel that we give him welcome for his own sake. When I was an orphan, he adopted me as his child."

"I know that, darling; but you speak of him so little, and we read of him so much, that one forgets he is a family friend."

"We shall be kind to him?"

"As kind as kindness can be. He's a strange man, the Duke tells me; silent in company, and fond of lonely walks. I'm warned that we may only see him for an instant."

"We can let him feel that he is welcome, and then leave him to do what pleases him the best."

"Yes, Di, of course. Now, let us consider how we stand. Sit down, and look our evil in the face. We ought to settle things before these people come with their flags and rackets."

"I am listening," she replies, her face towards Frank, who is engaged in pulling at the signal ropes.

"First, Di, I want you to feel that everything depends on you."

"No, no; that lays too much on me."

"For eight years, Di, you've been my tyrant——"

"Fie, sir! *I* have played the tyrant?"

"Always done with me as you pleased."

"I, Leonard! Listen, naughty man, and veil those saucy brows in shame. Who came across the sea, in all his insolent beauty, and stole away the heart of a poor child from her father's house?"

"Hooray!"

"Who rushed into a poor artist's studio, seized her wrist, opened the locket on her arm, and found how she was wearing her heart on her sleeve?"

"Hooray!"

"Who came upon a woman in her day of doubt, and dragged her into church, and married her, in spite of her appeals for time to consider what she ought to do, and get the benefit of good advice?"

"Ah! Di, I've been a sad dog, and the time has come for me to mend. It's Mayday, and the day demands a queen. You shall be queen."

"Only if you will share my throne."

"Now, then, to be, or not—go in, or not go in? That is our question now. The cabinet will dissolve, that's certain: the arrival of his Excellency makes it certain. Grough has seen his cousin, the Liberal whip, and learnt that they expect supply to be voted in a week. If so, the writs will go out next morning, and the polling may take place on midsummer day."

"Day of that red red rose, Leonard?"

"Day when a certain lady chose her knight."

"Day of Frank's birth."

"A day of happy omens, Di. Frank's birthday! How we'll make these turrets ring when that day comes again!"

"First birthday kept by the child under his ancestral roof."

"Can you recall the last, Di?"

"That sunny isle! I see it in my mind's eye now. A tiny bay, with stretch of sand and shells, a green receding shore, and here and there a clump of palms. A yacht is lying out, from which a boat puts off, and lands a happy group. There is a prince, a lady, and a child. The natives come to greet them, bringing them presents of fruit and flowers. Among the flowers there is a red rose. The prince picks out the

red rose, and lays it in the lady's bosom with a kiss; and then the natives feast and dance until the sun goes down. They were a gentle race!"

"Yes, Di; it might be well if we infused some of that gentle blood into the savage arteries of St. Giles."

Diana gives a little start, not noticed by her husband. It is only as she thinks; but every hint of his opinion as to race and colour is of interest in her present mood. He says no more; his eyes being turned towards Frank: and she resumes the argument from which they were wandering so far away as Santa Cruz.

"The party want you to go in?"

"They reckon on me, Di. Here are six or seven letters from the Carlton singing the same old song. Eight years ago, when my father died, they lost the seat. One seat lost, you know, means two votes less in a division. Your side counts one less, the enemy counts one more, and a majority of two may kill or save a ministry. Our men have set their hearts on winning back this seat, and scoring these two votes in the persons of St. Leger and myself."

"They fancy we can win the second vote?"

"They say so. London calls to us for help. The leaders know that we are rich, and the expenses of a contest must be great. They fancy we can do what no one else can do."

"The county is of that opinion also?"

"On our own side, to a man. The Lyles have always been in parliament. Hardly a single ancestor of mine, since the red and white roses gave up fighting, has passed through life without going up to Lon-

don, Oxford, or some other town, as knight of the shire. It is expected of us, just as coal for the poor and timber for the jetty are expected from us. We shall have the whole Doncaster interest and the Downcaster vote will bring us in. Whether we stand or not, is for you to say. The county proffers; Lady Lyle replies."

"You said last night, that our consent or our refusal is a choice of evils?"

"Yes, dear; evil one day or evil another day. We have had seven years of freedom; shall we have seven more?"

"Eh? you mean to hint that you have served for Rachel, and found it Leah!"

"Hem! what a comedian, Di! I mean that whether we will or no these public duties dog our steps, and will abridge our liberties at last."

"Look at the boy, Leonard. How he's tugging at those ropes!"

"The rogue! He's signalling to the yacht for Cox."

"I'm selfish, Leonard; we have certainly been living for ourselves too much. Was it too much?"

"Life has been very sweet, and very fruitful, Di."

"We've read a great deal, seen a great deal, enjoyed a great deal. We are happier, perhaps better, for our having been so much alone. But I am not so sure that we can live those days again. The world recalls us from Arcadia, and the world must be obeyed. Duty to one's self comes first, but duty to the commonwealth comes next. If we are clearly called, we must respond. Our country has the paramount claim. The question is, if we are clearly called?"

"Time must be given to these new duties, Di; time will no longer be my own and yours."

"I understand that, Leonard, and am ready to accept my lot. Your glory is my joy. If you are great and happy, I shall be content. You'll let me come and hear you speak?"

With comic shrug and twinkle, Leonard is beginning to whistle his reply, when he notices that Frank, in playing with the signal ropes, has got the cord about his leg. He springs up the bank, uncoils the rope, and asks Diana whether he shall call in Cox. On her assent, he signals, and is answered from the yacht.

"There, Frank, Cox will soon be here, and in the afternoon we'll have a sail. Now to thy swing, my little man."

CHAPTER VII.

Startled.

COMING back to the bench where Diana sits, that comic twinkle still about the corners of his mouth, Leonard pats her on the arm, inquiring whether she wants to hear him prate—the lady who was a Sidons at seventeen to hear an English county member prate?

"I shall delight in hearing you."

"Then, darling, you must teach me how to talk."

"How, saucy boy! Teach you how to talk?"

"Why, who can talk like you? Good heavens, Di, does a man forget such things as your display that night, when you electrified the whole drawing-room at Doncaster House?"

"Hush, Leonard, that is all gone by; no good in raking up dead fires. There was a time when I was proud of speech."

"Not for pride's sake, but for your native land."

"I must forget all that. Enough for me, if I remember that they were my artist days, before you stooped to me, and lifted me so high."

Leonard is slipping his arm round her waist, and kissing her soft cheek, when Diana gives a little start, and vibrates with a passing shiver. "Di!" he whispers in a tone of roused attention.

"What is that stirring in the copse?"

There is a stir in the copse; so slight, however, that a fine ear could hardly say whether it is the whirr of a bird or the rustle of a rabbit. Leonard hears no sound at all, and Diana is uncertain of the noise. But she turns pale, and quivers in her joints, as she had done at Riverside some years ago. What is the cause? No Sachem haunts this Yorkshire cliff; no spirits linger in this Yorkshire copse. Except in some poor cabin where a horse-shoe has been nailed above a door to keep off evil spirits, no superstition lingers on these breezy downs. Yet, here is a "warning," such as might report some sinister presence near her feet. Is it in the air, or in the earth? Just now, in the privacy of her bower, she was conscious of Mary being close to her. Is this new warning from that angel?

Rising from her bench, pacing up and down the walk, and flirting with her fan, Diana tries to still her heart and steady her excited nerves. Leonard regards her quietly, but with concern. She seems unstrung to-day. Something has put her out; but she has too much mastery of herself to sigh and sob. An hour ago, he found her pale and sad in her own boudoir, but she rallied to his voice, and soon recovered under

his caress. Now, she is pale and sad again, but with a sterner, more defiant air. No eye save his could see the change, but he has scanned that face so long that he can read it like a clock. What troubles her, and on her wedding-day?

"You're pale, Di. Are you ill?"

"Look at this rose."

"Well, what of the rose?"

"It has no scent!"

"Di, what are you dreaming of? No scent! You're bored. This country life is dull. We must go back to town. A dash of politics will pick you up like a tonic."

"Leonard, I have done with politics. My line of duty lies in one word—that of wife."

"My young and darling bride!"

"Don't call me young. I'm growing sadly old."

"At twenty-six! Dear Di, be merciful. You'll kill me with your jokes. At twenty-six! When his Grace arrives, show him my ashes and my epitaph—Leonard Lyle, dead of a jest!"

Diana kindles, and resumes her seat. He has no secrets on his mind—he can be always fresh and frank!

"Old, Di?" he rattles on, "no woman is at her prime till she is forty-five. She may be pretty, winsome, and engaging——."

"Yes, engaging and engaged!"

"And most engaging when engaged, but she is never at her best till she has passed her fortieth year."

"You always court with compliments."

"Di, women govern us from youth to age; but what

a winged variety of charm! What is a woman? At twenty-five, a picture; at thirty-five, a solace; at forty-five, a deity; first, followed, then obeyed, at last adored."

"If she could only last!"

"My mother rode to hounds at fifty."

"She was Yorkshire born and bred. Our fibre is relaxed by the Virginian air. We women of the South grow old, while people born in the same year, but living on the English soil, look young."

"Here, Frank!" cries Leonard, merrily, to the boy, who slips from his swing, runs up to his parents, and on a nod from Leonard, stands at ease, in the attitude of a man on drill.

"'Tention! Answer me, my boy; how old is mamma?"

"Old! How old? Why, she's not old at all."

"Right, boy! Dismiss. Give me your hand; and there's a shilling for a top. Once more—'Tention! How young, then, is mamma?"

Frank seems puzzled now. First, he thinks of Joe, and then of Bessie, but he puts them both aside. There's Grace—his Auntie Grace; but Grace is not young enough for him. Then, finding what he wants, a smile lights up his big blue eyes.

"Mamma's as young as that angel on my cot."

"Good, Frank! Dismiss! My darling, here's a crown to buy a kite. I'm proud of thee, my boy!"

Leonard lifts his child to the swing, and Diana, after watching them for a moment with her radiant face, glides up to her husband, lays her fingers on his arm, and says:

"You spoil me, Leonard."

"You are that angel, Di."

"Don't say that, Leonard," she objects, with a look bright of comedy; "they say a man never sees an angel in his wife until the thought has come into his head, that it might be better for them both if that particular angel were in heaven."

"I spoil you, Di! You're like the heavens, too high for man to spoil."

"There! Quizzing me again?" she bridles up, with a bewitching grace.

"Quizzing or not," he answers, in a lower tone, "I say too high for man to spoil."

The gravity of his voice strikes her, and consenting to his change of mood, as by a natural harmony of spirit, she bends her head so that he may touch her brow, whispering to him as she bends:

"Forgive me, Leonard, if your love makes me too proud."

What sound is that? A sound? A double sound. Surely, there is a twitter and a murmur in the bush. A bird—a snake? It may be nothing but a bird, or snake. Diana listens to this twitter in the bush. Afar off, on the moor, there comes a clang of horns. Leonard takes up that sound. It is the county coming in committee to the Lord of Castle Lyle. Diana bends her startled ear to that low rustle in the copse.

CHAPTER VIII.

Coming Events.

TOUCHING Diana's arm, and drawing her attention back from birds in the copse to bugles on the moor, Leonard replies to her last words:

"Not proud, but high. Yon turret is not proud. Five hundred years ago, Rupert's tower was standing as it stands to-day; but who would say that tower is proud? The stem of Randolph is too lofty for the charge of pride."

"Leonard!"

"You, Di, being what you are—supreme in beauty as in birth——"

"Leonard, I never heard you ask one syllable about my birth!"

"Why should I, dear? What fool would ask yon stones if they are old? Great families need not vaunt their blood. A Percy never boasts; Stanley is not required to prove his shield. A daughter of Frank Randolph wants no pedigree."

Startled by this change of topic, and connecting Leonard's mood with the disturbance in her own mind, caused by the reading of Mary's note, Diana asks her husband, in a tone not wholly free from fear, whether it is sufficient to be Frank Randolph's child?

From any other lips than hers this question would have raised suspicion and provoked inquiry, but Diana is so little like other people, and Leonard feels so safe in his own knowledge of her family, that his only answer is to call in Frank, to take the child on his lap, and give him a formal lesson in that family record:

"Frank, my boy, give ear to me: and when thou art a man repeat the same words to thy son. One of thy fathers was the Silver Knight, who fought in the train of Lion Heart and fell in the breach at Ascalon. His blood is in thy veins; yet there is nothing in thy blood so noble as that which comes from thy mother's side. The blood of Randolph is the blood of kings."

While Leonard is speaking to the child, more blare of trumpets creeps along the moor. The band is still a long way off, but Leonard, catching at the sound, sets Frank on his feet, and coming nearer to his wife, says cheerily, "Here are our guests. What shall we say? Decide. Are we to float or fix? Are we to follow the Argonauts or dazzle parliaments and shine in courts?"

"Leonard, with you the earth is all one court."

"You'd give up everything for me—Hyde Park, St. James', Grosvenor Square?"

"I've noticed, Leonard, as an insolent fact in nature, that the sunshine falls as softly on these shrubs as on our trees in Grosvenor Square."

"Still, there is the world."

"Leonard, my world is in thy arms."

The trumpet blast grows nearer, and a sound of hoofs is heard. Five seconds, and Dr. Lamber rushes in, dressed in the red coat of the Holderness hunt, and carrying rosettes and a great roll of paper.

"Lyle for the county! Hooray, Leonard! Brava, my lady! Hooray, Frank! Lyle for knight of the shire! How are you all? Hoo, hoo!" pants the noisy and hilarious doctor of medicine.

"Take breath, man. If you mean to vote for me, hold on."

"Allow me, Leonard; allow me, madam, to adorn you with rosettes. This is our colour—old true blue; blue as the pupils of your ladyship's eyes!" he pants and gurgles.

"Warren, I never saw a warmer partisan than you!"

"Gad, Leonard, it was a chase! They're all there, such a squad! I caught them on the moor—troop, band, county—dashed into the crowd, rode through their rank and file, pushed on alone, the first to run you down! Not easy to beat Lamber when his pecker's up; eh, Leonard? Hi, ho! tally-ho!" and the noisy doctor cracks his whip, hitches his boot, wabbles his elbows, snaps, screams, whistles, and behaves in the hysterics proper to a hunting field. Leonard and Diana smile, and Frank swarms up Lamber's back in ecstasies.

"Bravo, Warren!" cried Leonard; "like your profession—in at the death."

"And how is Grace, doctor?" asks Diana. "Is she coming to see me soon?"

"To-morrow, Lady Lyle. Hish, here they come."

"You have not told us who they are, Dr. Lamber."

"Our Committee. On the road, my lady, almost at the gate. The county's coming: some on private, most on public business. There's his Grace, your grandfather, the Lord Lieutenant. His Grace comes under the rose——"

"My rose, Di; remember, my granddad's a dreadful flirt," laughs Leonard, nudging his wife, who only answers, "Hem, go on."

"There's Lord St. Leger, and the Lord knows who. Those saints are creeping into the peerage, or perhaps the peerage is annexing the book of saints. We used to have only two, now we have ten or twelve saints somebody or other in the House of Lords."

"Who else is coming, doctor, besides Lord St. Leger and Lord knows who?"

"First, my lady, there's Boggs; yes, first of all there's Boggs."

"Boggs, doctor? Who is Boggs?"

"Boggs, my lady? Boggs, the chairman of our committee! Boggs is—Boggs. He calls himself Mester Boggs. He was a spinner, he is a sheriff; he was a radical, he is a conservative; but he was in past times, is at present, will be always, Boggs."

"And then?"

"Then, there's the very reverend Doctor Druce, Dean of St. Oswald's, and four canons from the chapter; after them come Jonas Selph, Mayor of St. Oswald's, and the board of aldermen, with bands and banners. Then, my lady, there's——"

"Hold, man: you'll choke!"

"More than all, my lady, though he's neither here nor there in such a business, there's his Excellency General Cridge, Commander of the Black Brigade. Strange fellow, I am told, with slavery on the brain. They say he hates company and hardly ever speaks. As I rode through the crowd I saw him open the carriage door, leap out, and stride off, making towards the cliff, leaving the whole company laughing at his stride, and Lord St. Leger crowing his cock-a-doodle-doo. It's a bad thing having causes on the brain, my lady. Never have causes on the brain; for if you take away the cause, the brain goes, too. There's his poor Excellency; he had slavery on the brain. While slavery was there, his head remained; when they took away slavery the brain went with it. Poor old party! I would say, poor old gentleman, but he objects to be called a gentleman. When he comes back, he'll enter by the window or the chimney, not the door."

"You must not mock the General," Leonard warns his cousin in a graver voice. "He is a great man; as a scholar and as a soldier, he has won renown. If he is not as other men are, let us thank Heaven that made him so. We are too much alike. Now, Warren, you and I are like twins."

"Ah, Leonard, I should like—but here they are. What row and rumpus! You've decided on your answer, Leonard?"

"No, not yet. Come in, Di; we must go and meet the Duke."

CHAPTER IX.

Lyle for ever!

WHEN Leonard and Diana have gone in, Lamber unrolls his parcel, smooths out his bills, and looks about for vacant wall and post. Joe comes in from the stable the moment he is wanted, just as though he were a servant in a comedy.

"Who's there?" coughs Lamber, turning on his knee.

"All serene, doctor. Only Joe."

"It's all serene? Come, Joe, lend a hand. There are your master's colours. Lyle for ever! Start, lad—sparkle up, lad. Lyle for ever!"

"Lyle for ever!" answers Joe, waving one of the placards and relapsing, as he always does under excitement, into his favourite melody "Du-dah."

"What's up, my hearties—Castle got a-fire?" inquires the skipper, hustling in by way of the cliff, with a boat's crew, in answer to Leonard's signals from the flag-staff.

"Castle on fire!" retorts the doctor with contempt; "county's on fire! We're burning for Sir Leonard Lyle!"

"Going into parlyment, doctor?"

"That's it, Cox; old times come back. Go at it, skipper, go at it, bo'son; hammer and paste-pot. Stick me this poster on the flag-staff."

Hauling the pennon down, Cox pins a placard, "Lyle for ever!" printed in deep blue ink on creamy white paper to the bunting, and then runs it up once more.

"Hooray!" cries Lamber. Joe and the bo'son greet the new signal with a hearty shout, on which the crew give tongue. Picking up one of the rosettes, Joe decks his cap, saying it's lucky for the Derby, on which he has made a book, in the Yorkshire fashion, with three or four edging bets.

"What now, my hearty?" grins Cox, there being a feud of jaws between the old sea-dog and the stable-lad.

"What now?" retorts Joe; "I'll put my money on the bob-tail nag, will you put yours on the bay?"

"All hands aboard!" shouts Cox; "now, lads, true blue for ever!"

They fix the placards on tree and wall, until the garden glistens with the blue and white. Then Cox calls in his crew, and hangs a couple of the placards on each sailor, back and front. A noise is heard inside; voices in the hall, footsteps in the lady's bower. "They're coming out into the garden?" Lamber asks.

"Not yet a-cooming," Joe replies, on which the doctor hums, and bustles off into the house.

"My lads," cries Cox; "clear decks; right about

face. Quick, march!" So, Cox and his crew file out, Joe on their flank, yelling "Lyle for ever!" and from time to time, by way of change, inquiring whether anybody is disposed to put their money on the bob-tail nag, and announcing confusedly, like a lad in liquor, his readiness to bet on the bay. When they are gone, the coast being now clear, Tab, who has been eyeing them furtively, creeps from her hiding-place in the copse, and after looking round the garden, hisses to her companion—"S . . . imon!"

Simon creeps forth into the open, strokes his whip, and soothes his stomach with a dram. Tab looks as though she wished to ask something and tell something, but her master frowns on her and lifts his whip—"Shut up!"

"But, S . . . imon . . ."

"Shpeak ven you shpoke to—dat your place."

She drops her eyes with an expression full of ire, if not menace; but she holds her tongue and waits, although the thing she wants to tell her master is the primary fact, that the lady in the garden was that girl whom they had known as Dinah Crump and looked for at Niagara Falls.

"Vat he shay—dat boy! Vant tip? I gife him tip for Derby, ven he get me shareman for my company. Tell me, vat he shay!"

"The fool said this—if he had a straight tip for the Derby, he could bag fifty pounds," snarls Tab, venting on Joe the wrath she dares not pour on Simon.

"So! Dat so!" he mumbles. "I get my shareman; bag five hundred dollar. Dree hundred dollar shquare dat sheriff. Mit two hundred dollar, cut my shtick, and

leave dis Tab to Christian friends." Turning to Tab, he asks her in a rather cajoling voice: "Vat elsh?"

Tab's temper passes, like a young animal's, from wrath to mimicry, and from mimicry to wrath. Softened by Simon's tone, she blows out her cheeks, straddles her legs, squares her fists, and standing in Joe's favourite pose, conoodles an imaginary sweetheart, and capers to the tune of Du-dah.

"Hold on, dere," chuckles Simon.

"That is all," adds Tab.

"Yah—catamount!"

Apt to forget her cunning, when the comic fit is on her, Tab drops the part of Joe, and takes up that of suffering slave; a part which she has acted on many platforms and at many love-feasts with success. Her impish and mimetic genius, tempered, not subdued, by her dash of English and Italian blood, is well adapted for such pranks, and people of a higher grade than the frequenters of Little Bethel have been often taken in by her pliant air and mobile face. She bent so low, and looked so meek! But her submission is official, not sincere. Even while she crawls and capers in these comic parts, the yellow in her eye grows red with anger, as she thinks of Simon's scorn in not allowing her to speak, even when her secret is so serious to them both, and the clench of her back teeth, though firm, allows the words to hiss through her lips inaudibly: "White trash—slave-driver—cheat!"

Simon, after looking round the garden, seems perplexed. Consulting his flask, and finding no guidance in his dram, he beckons Tab to come a little closer to his side. Again adopting his cajoling tone, he tries to

suck her brain, without the compliment of stooping to ask advice.

"You shee dat fool?"

"Lout who smells of stable?" asks the quadroon in her turn, assured that Simon has only seen Joe, as the blind see things, not seeing them.

"Fool, vat dink he play poker."

"Yes. I saw him. Have you heard his name? Can it be Joe? Try and remember, if it happens to be Joe?"

"Joe? Fool shaid his name ish Joe."

Tab bites her lips in silence. She can hardly be mistaken in that horsey laugh, those squaring arms, that gurgle of a melody, always out of tune. But for the present, she will keep suspicion to herself. Why brave that lash by blurting out?

"The master, Simon—have you heard *his* name?"

"A brave boy," Simon maunders, taking no notice of her question. "Gife him two pot o' beer. Dat business, Tab. Hold his mout' so; pour down von pot, pull up von hogshead."

"And you learnt something?"

"All sort of dings. Old place; big family; young baronet, horses, yachts; going in parliament. Goot for my shareman, Taab?"

"Baronet, member for county—that's all right. You said his name was——"

"Lyle. Sir Leonard Lyle."

Tab bites her lips still more. It is as she supposed. In running from a sheriff's officer, they have fallen on that lad whom Simon lashed in the negro-yard, and on that rapid hitting gentleman who knocked Simon down

and snatched away his knife. They must be gone, and gone at once.

"Simon, let us make tracks."

CHAPTER X.

The Black Republican.

A STRANGER passes through the grounds; a man in dark uniform and a broad felt hat. He is tall, and wears a long white beard. Has he perceived them? He is coming by the great ridge of laurels towards Rupert's tower. Tab is not sure; for they are hidden in their opening of the copse.

"S . . . till, stand still! A step. I'll follow and observe."

A moment later she returns from her quest; a new anxiety on her dark face.

"Let us make tracks."

"Vat ish the matter?"

"There is our enemy, the Cherokee!"

"Curse him! Dat Black Republican?"

Simon puts up his hand to his throat, coughs a hard cough, as though his wind-pipe were being twisted in a cord.

"Sure he ish gone—sure he ish gone?"

"Sure, Simon, I can see him stepping down the path."

"Vich vay he go?"

"Down, by the stones into the tower."

"Curse him!"

"Let us make tracks. No time to waste. Let us make tracks."

Tab's instinct, surer than Simon's logic, warns her

that the danger, great before, is much increased by the arrival of his Excellency, known to them mainly as the Cherokee chief. If he perceives them, they are lost. Joe might set on Simon, and the baronet back his servant. Such a fighting devil is not likely to forget old scores. And then that Dinah Crump, the woman at his side. She may be Dinah Crump or Lady Lyle—who knows? But she is sure to recollect that charge of stabbing, that demand for blood-money, made against an absent man. These risks are bad enough, but they are nothing to the risk of meeting General Cridge. Joe and Sir Leonard might fail to recognise a person they have seen but once, and that on a dark night, nine years ago; but the medicine-man knows them well, and has seen them lately in New York.

“Let us make tracks; let us begone.”

Slokk stares at her with vacant, fish-like eyes.

“Make tracks!” quoth he. How are they to move? That is the puzzle in his brain.

“Yorkshire’s played out,” she pleads. “Yorkshire’s too hot.”

Staring at her with rueful face, he asks her how they are to go, not in so many words, but by the act of drawing out the linings of his two pockets, and flapping the empty bags down his flabby thighs.

Tab chuckles at the sight, for she has seen her master up that tree a hundred times. Not a word will she tell him about the presence at Castle Lyle of the girl he wanted at Niagara Falls; partly because he would not hear her when she wished to speak; partly because a twinge of the old jealousy comes back; more than all because it is her nature to dodge and plot, and she is tickled by the thought of keeping

something back that she feels certain he is eager to find out. She loves the fellow in a wild way, as a dog may love a man, but she has never given her trust to him; for the sufficing reason that he keeps no faith with her, even in the matter which to her is all in all. She hardly knows whether she is his wife or not. He married her in open day. He put the ring on her finger. It was not his ring, but hers; he borrowed it for the nonce, but still he put it on. A parson joined their hands, two witnesses signed the book; they had a bridal feast, where every one got drunk, and the groom's best man, fighting over cards, was killed. Yet sometimes he pretends it was a joke, saying he could not marry her, as he had a wife alive!

Going up to Simon, Tab says stolidly, "Husband!"

"Ugh!" he shudders, flicking out his whip.

"That lash again!" snarls the dark woman, turning from her bully, and glancing at the third finger of her left hand. Tab runs her eye quickly down the row of brass and copper hoops, singles out one hoop for notice, just to assure herself that it is safe, and throws her head back jauntily. It is safe. That hoop is neither brass nor copper, though the dirt has stained it almost black. The hoop is gold; a massive hoop, and of the purest art. It is her wedding-ring. Her own? Well, never mind; it is the ring that Simon put on, and neither he nor any one alive knows where she got it. If he only knew; knew that this hoop, which he had put on her finger, was the very ring she stole that night from the dead woman in the negro shed! For years she has worn this ring under his prying eyes. More than once he has kicked her for having

missed her prize that night; and all the while she has been wearing it under his very nose.

It is her wedding-ring, and something more; a piece of gold that in the last resort she can exchange for coin. A jeweller would give her twenty shillings for that hoop, and twenty shillings might in desperate circumstances save their lives.

The circumstances are not desperate yet; but the mere fact of her reserve of coin—of that which she can melt at pleasure into coin—gives Tab a certain air of mastery over Slokk. For once she is in a position to offer terms. Yes, let him own her as his wife, and give her back the marriage lines, and she is not unwilling to either pawn or sell that ring, and place the money in his hands.

Purring and hissing gently, she steals up to him and whispers:

“Simon, may I speak?”

“Vat you mean, Taab Crump?”

“Crump! Crump me no Crumps. I’ll not be called Tab Crump.”

“Vat den, shpitifire?”

“Simon you will please to call me wife.”

“Ugh!”

“My name is Tabitha Slokk. It’s not much of a name, but then it’s yours and mine.”

“Ugh! Get out!”

“Simon, I shall not get out. Don’t twirl your whip at me. I won’t get out; you shall explain your ways, and set me right again.”

“Vamose!”

“S . . . imon, I won’t vamose. I’ve been your wife seven years, yet hardly know what’s what.”

Feeling for his flask and putting it to his lips he drains the last drop, and shaking the flask ruefully, says to himself, "Gife her dat gal in Viper Flat. Nodings keep Taab goot, exep dat gal in Viper Flat."

"Am I your lawful wife?"

"Vell, Taab, dere is dat gal in Viper Flat. Dey shay, first wife is always wife."

"Don't, Simon, you will break my heart!" sobs the quadroon, at once pulled up and cowed by fear of that imaginary rival.

"Law, Taab, justice-law. First come, first claim. Poor gal! vat you done to her, Taab? Who run away mit her husband?"

"Don't. For God's sake, don't."

"Ve must go back to Viper Flat."

"O, Simon, you will break my heart!"

"Dere ish no oder way;" and then he mumbles to himself—"a vild cat, you must shtroke her—sho, or strike her—sho!"

Tab's eyes are riveted on some object in the bush. "S . . . imon!" she calls in a low whisper, warning him to slip aside, but he can hardly catch her warning ere the tall, commanding figure of the Black Republican hoves in sight, coming up the path from the vaults of Rupert's tower.

"Dip, slide!" hisses Tab, in deep alarm, on which Simon, who needs no second hint, slips back into the copse: while Tab, hiding behind the bushes, watches the Black Republican stalk in a grave and measured tread across the garden. Has he seen them? She is not quite sure. The Cherokee is not a man of starts and poses, who allows you to guess what he sees and learn what he knows. His face is towards the lady's

bower. He pauses for a moment, listening to the sounds within, and then turns slowly on his heel and goes his way by another path along the cliff. Tab waits until he passes out of sight, keeping her eyes on him, yet listening to the noise indoors.

A voice cries lustily, "Room there for his Grace; room there for Lady Lyle!"

Tab backs into the copse, crying, in an undertone:

"'Tis she! A gleam of sunshine in my eyes. Can she be Lady Lyle?"

BOOK VIII.

M A Y - D A Y .

PERIOD, 1869.

CHAPTER I.

My Lord Duke.

"Room for his Grace! room for Lady Lyle!" cries Lamber, rushing down the spiral stairs into the garden, and appealing to the universe in general, the roses and rhododendrons in particular, to retire in favour of an elderly gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons, abundance of frill and ruffles, and a pair of shoes with silver buckles, who is leading out into the open air the young mistress of Castle Lyle.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" crows Lord St. Leger, from the stair-head, following the fussy doctor, and carrying Frank, his godson, on his patrician shoulders. Frank is always in the front. After them comes my lord Duke, holding Lady Lyle by the hand, as young gentlemen in the days of Queen Charlotte used to hold the hands of young ladies in a saraband.

His Grace descends into the garden, leading Diana by the tip of her finger, much as the Duke of Wellington may have led the Duchess of Richmond through a quadrille at the Brussels ball.

"You smile, my lady," he observes as they reach

the border, making a low and formal bow; "my visit is to you, and you alone."

"A curtesy for your Grace's courtesy," replies Diana, sweeping her robes in front of him, in rapid mimicry of the formal kind of curtesy which her Grace of Richmond may have made to his Grace of Wellington on the eve of Waterloo.

"A peer of the realm, my lady, never meddles with those matters of the lower house."

"Not even when the law forbids him? Peers never long for the forbidden fruit?"

"Peeresses may. They're privileged, you know, by rank and sex. A lady is not required to set a pattern of obedience to the lower classes."

"She has enough to do in keeping the man of her own class in order?"

"Let us give these gentlemen a wider berth."

Leonard comes out with Boggs and Selph, followed by a crowd of noisy and excited persons, every one yelling at his topmost note, "Sir Leonard for the county! Lyle for ever!" Catching heat from the crowd, St. Leger rushes into the centre of the throng, Frank on his back, and oversetting Boggs, the chairman, crows them all down with his cock-a-doodle-doo. A roar of laughter greets the noble lord. St. Leger is a great success. Yorkshire is proud of him.

"Observe," says his Grace apart to Lady Lyle, "that's our new fashion in the lower house. In my time, we were bored to death by Fox; now they are regaled by chanticleer."

Flattered by the notice taken of his voice, St. Leger strides to Leonard, and begs, with high-bred comedy, to propose——

"No, no," cries Boggs, "excuse me, I propose——," but Selph, doubting whether Boggs is the right man in the right place, begs also to propose——, and then Druce, a public man of many years' standing, interferes with these absurdities of Boggs and Selph.

"None of these gentlemen seems disposed to play the second part," Diana whispers to his Grace.

"No," smacks his Grace, patting his hands in cynical humour, "in a republic, where they are all equals, no one cares to be vice-president."

Druce whispers to St. Leger that Boggs and Selph are too uppish, and ought to be taken down.

St. Leger affects the gaiety of a boy on the sixth form, a gaiety which is not above the contagion of practical jokes. Since he left the army and entered Parliament as member for his native shire, he has achieved renown. He is cock of the House. A new young England party has sprung up, with the design of confuting philosophical radicals, hard-headed fellows who know what they want, and have a nasty way of saying so, by the patrician expedient of braying like asses and crowing like cocks. A dozen young men of family, representing their several counties, make up a party, of which the country hears too little, and the House of Commons too much. Some of these clean, well-dressed, and tawny patricians can bray; some can only crow; St. Leger can bray and crow. When Parliament is in session he has plenty of practice, for those Radicals are very much given to making speeches; and when the senators adjourn for the grouse and partridges, he keeps his voice out of tune by throwing his mite of discord into every crowd at race-course and

country fair. Tab's impudent face is hardly more familiar on the hill at Epsom than St. Leger's voice.

"Come, Lady Lyle," his Grace observes, "let's leave these gentlemen to their politics. My royal mistress used to say——you will pardon me the liberty of saying so, but you're rather like her majesty, Lady Lyle."

"In point of age?"

"Your skipping spirit goes off again like——"

"An antelope on a prairie?"

"Thanks for the simile. Majesty, like beauty, is always young. Sit down, here. Let us talk of youth and love."

"They'll overhear us, and report that we've been talking of ourselves."

"Because we talk of youth and love!"

As they are sitting down, a rustle passes through the copse close by; a dusky face peeps out, but is not seen; a savage glare lights up the eyes in that dusky face. In low, sharp, sibilant notes, a whisper runs along the ground, and then that dusky face drops out of sight. The sportive light in Diana's eyes grows fainter, though she presses her hand against her side, and answers in her gayest tone, "Go on; I'm listening to your Grace."

"If one could only get a breath!" gasps Leonard, struggling from the press of his committee.

"Space for Sir Leonard!" screams the doctor, pushing the aldermen and canons back, and trying with the handle of his hunting-whip to clear a ring.

"Mr. Boggs and gentlemen——" Leonard begins, on which Boggs calls out, "Hear, hear."

"Gentlemen, I have heard your kind proposals——"

"Hear him!" bellows Boggs.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" pipes St. Leger.

"You know me, gentlemen, as an independent sort of man. I like to yacht and go about. I don't want office, and I don't seek public life."

"No, no; but we want you," shouts Boggs, and for once county choruses to Boggs.

"Gentlemen, there are lots of abler and better men in this great county."

"No, no; we want you—none but you," they shout in answer; "Lyle for knight of the shire!"

"Think of the family!" suggests Lamber.

"Think of the county!" adds Boggs.

"Think of the world!" chimes in St. Leger.

"The world?" ponders Leonard, with a humorous smile.

His Grace, paying as much attention to Leonard's politics as to Diana's prattle, catching the word, rises to his feet, and taking her hand in his again, advances to the ring, which opens for them, and continues the appeal:

"Think of Lady Lyle!"

"Bravo!" answers Leonard; "you see, gentlemen, it is not only a case of the world, but of the world's wife. Let the world's wife decide."

"Hear, hear!" shouts Boggs.

"Cock-a-doo-dle-doo!" replied St. Leger, bonneting the sheriff.

"That's a fair offer, gentlemen," continues Leonard. "Here is a woman's question. You invite this lady's husband to join the latest club in London. That's a wife's affair. Get Lady Lyle's consent."

"My lady," says his Grace, in a low whisper, "blow him an assenting kiss."

"Your Grace is growing wicked, naughty boy. What will you be when you grow up? Betray my husband with a kiss! Without the thirty pieces, too! Oh, fie!"

CHAPTER II.

My Knight!

ALL eyes are turned on Lady Lyle, who stands apart from the press, leaning lightly on the Duke's arm, and smiling at the duel between Boggs, retired woollen-spinner, and St. Leger, leader of the new aristocratic party, and heir to the ducal honours of the Fanes.

"Speak for us! say the word! give us a token, Lady Lyle!" shout the whole circle.

"Stay," cries Leonard, "not all at once! A ring—a fair ring! Joe, my lad, help Lord St. Leger to make a ring."

"All serene," answers Joe; "stand back, gentlemen; let my lady hear what you want."

A space is quickly cleared, in the centre of which stand the aged Duke and Lady Lyle; the first protesting with comic gravity against being mobbed into an election riot; the second laughing heartily at St. Leger's antics, as his lordship slips about and teases the irascible Boggs.

"I'm out of breath, Lamber," gasps the sheriff, aside to Lamber; "speak for us; you're his cousin and she listens to you."

"Ahem! my lady!" starts the doctor, clearing his throat, and sawing the air with his hunting-whip, "these gentlemen, members of the Holderness hunt, desire me to address you in the cause of—yes, the cause of

good races, good government, good order, justice and humanity."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" pipes the young England party.

"We have to bring under your ladyship's notice the extraordinary circumstance that a patriotic fight is coming on, and that Sir Leonard hesitates about going to the front. We pray you to put your commands on him, as the lady that owns him. Send him to the front, my lady, like a Lyle of the old stamp of Castle Lyle!"

"The field is now your own, Lady Lyle," hints the Duke.

"You mean the word is now with me?" Diana asks.

"Yes, Di," adds Leonard, in a graver tone—"you have the first word and the last. Beware of what you say. I'm your knight now; they want me to be theirs. You're giving me away!"

"That puzzles me," says Diana to herself. Then turning to the Duke she asks:

"What thinks your Grace?"

"Peers never interfere, even though it is against the law. Blow him an assenting kiss."

"You're giving me bad advice?"

"No; by the Fane and Randolph coronets, no."

"To join the latest club in London?"

"Think of it so. You'll have more time to dance."

"With you, my lord duke?"

"Of course. Minuet, saraband, valse? I'll put you down for the first dance."

"That prospect tempts me."

"Make these gentlemen happy by assent."

"If I abstain from saying yes?"

"Then, we are free!" cries Leonard, throwing up his cap. "We'll order out the *Foam*, and start this evening for the Golden Isles."

A bell rings; every one turns round, knowing it is the luncheon-bell. The Holderness hunt is eager for champagne and pigeon-pie.

"Stay!" interrupts his Grace; "we have not earned our lunch. I think you told me, Leonard, that when Colonel Randolph fell, the male line of the Riverside Randolphs was extinct?"

"Yes; that is true. What follows?"

"Then we interpose."

"What!" laughs Diana; "peers of the realm interposing contrary to the law?"

"Not as peer of the realm, but as the chief of my own family. My lords and gentlemen of the shire, allow me to resume my rights. Sir Ralph, the first settler in Virginia of my lady's house, married Lady Muriel Fane, daughter of our ancestor, Charles, third Earl of Doncaster. The Riverside house being now extinct, except in Lady Lyle, we are the feudal chief. If she declines to answer for herself, it is our place to answer in her name."

"Hooray!" scream all the visitors in a breath.

"Gentlemen," laughs Diana, "his Grace has won. I yield; my knight is yours."

"Well done, fair cousin!" whispers the Duke to Lady Lyle.

"Remember, we're to dance," she puts in archly. "When Leonard sets the Thames on fire, you and I will dance while the water burns."

"A bargain, sealed on this fair hand!" his Grace replies, lifting the tips of Diana's fingers to his lips.

A shout of triumph rises from the county, capped by St. Leger's cock-a-doodle-doo. In the confusion of that bucolic applause—nowhere so noisy as close about Sir Leonard—a figure darts from the copse, passing by a rapid motion through the crowd to Leonard's side, and hisses in his ear these words:

"S...ee to your wife! She is not what she seems!"

"Eh—what? Who spake?" asks Leonard, facing round, having only half caught the woman's words, and utterly unaware of who she is that speaks to him in that snarling tone. At the same instant he perceives a woman, dressed in what strikes him as the costume of a gipsy woman from a race-course, gliding out of the throng, and slipping into the shrubberies.

"Joe," he calls to his man; who answers, "All serene!" and stands in readiness to receive his orders.

"Follow that tramp; see where she goes, and find out what she is."

Luncheon-bell rings a second time.

"A fair day, and a goodly work," resumes his Grace. "Now, Lady Lyle, before we go to lunch, oblige these gentlemen by giving them a tip—a straight tip, like a Yorkshire woman, Lady Lyle."

"A tip?"

"In earnest of success. Remember, this is poetry, not politics. You are our May-day Queen."

"Silence, for her ladyship!" call Lamber and the sheriff in one voice.

"Well, then," crows Diana, laughing merrily, "as your May-day Queen—*la Reine le veult!* Your Grace can play the chamberlain?"

"Madame, it has been my duty and delight to serve the Queen."

"My lord duke!" cries Diana, with a stately and bewitching coquetry.

"He waits your Majesty's commands."

"Then bid our loving and deserving subject kneel."

"Sir Leonard Lyle!"

"Hand me the sword."

Sir Leonard, entering on the humour of the moment, kneels. The bell rings a third time. Diana, listening, laughs.

"Hem! Luncheon waits. Rise, Knight of the Shire!"

A blare of trumpets greets the comedy. Leonard is about to rise, still laughing; but on looking at Diana, his face lights up with a quick fire, and dropping to his knee again, he kisses her hand, and whispers, in a low and serious tone, "My true heart's queen!"

CHAPTER III.

Tracked!

"In! quick! They are on our heels!"

"O...K! Vat ish he, Taab?"

"Dip down! I'll turn the key, and peep," whispers the quadroon, forcing Simon to crouch back into a corner of the room.

The room is a small bed-chamber in a roadside public-house at Port Lyle, an old and picturesque house, half hidden by the briars and brambles which overrun and almost swallow up the cliff. Eaves overhang the door and window, and a sign, which once contained a Saracen's head, swings across the road. Two benches jut into the path, sacred to the use of such poor pilgrims, drovers, tramps, and fishing folk as

go on foot, and like to drink their liquor in the open air. Tab's window overlooks this front. Her blind is down; but with a feline cunning, far beyond the reach of servant girls in novels, she peeps through a rent without touching the blind itself. Yes, there he is! in spite of his smock-frock—not the officer from York, but the more dangerous man whom she detected in the act of watching them at Harrogate. That fellow, as her Epsom training teaches her, is an officer from Scotland Yard. Once more they have been traced and caught. And who is that man in black uniform, with very white beard, coming up from the beach? He's making signs to the smock-frock! Yes! that's the Cherokee again! More mischief! All their enemies appear to be gathering on the ground at Port Lyle. A thrashing from Joe might be borne; even a cuff from Sir Leonard could have been endured: but this fellow in the smock-frock will not allow them to get off with kick and cuff! Hunted to their last hole, what can they do to baffle and evade that terrible Cherokee?

Tab turns to Simon, who is sitting on a stool in his corner staring sleepily at his empty flask, in the first stage of a tipsy doze. "S....s!"

"Hell-cat!" he starts; "some schnapps."

"Keep sober, if you can," she snarls in anger. "We have no schnapps."

"No schnapps? Let dere be schnapps!"

"S....s! If you were not too drunk, I'd ask you to look out. He's there."

"Vat dere? Not sheriff?"

"You are hunted down."

"Sure, Taab? Dat cuss from Harrogate?"

"The same, in spite of his disguise. Harrogate! He comes from Scotland Yard. It's that New York affair—that forgery on Caleb Clamm."

"Shmart man. Drink his goot healt. Some schnapps."

"Don't drink to-day. You'll want your wits, and more than your wits, this time."

"No schnapps, no wits. Ring bell."

"I won't ring, Simon."

"Slut and scum! No ring?"

"Slut and scum!" fires up Tab, now roused to fury; "slut and scum! And what are you, slave-driving villain? Trash! white trash."

Simon gets up and fumbles for his whip, but cannot find the handle, for it is not there.

"Vere ish my crack?" he growls, staggering towards the woman, his flask in his lifted hand.

"Strike me again! Do, if you dare. I tell you, bully, that your trade is gone. This soil is free; men are not suffered on this shore to beat their wives. Here's justice; here they flog the floggers. Strike me, and I'll have you flayed."

A tap is heard, on which man and wife drop their jars, and turn their faces towards the door, listening for any renewal of the sound. A second tap is heard.

"He, dere?"

"The door is fast," she answers in a whisper. "I will scout."

Stealing to the window on tip-toe, she makes a rapid survey of the road. Smock-frock is sitting by one of the benches, smoking his clay pipe and sipping at his pot of beer. Far up the road, almost at the Castle, is the figure of the Cherokee about to pass within the gates. Satisfied so far, Tab slips to the

door, drops on one knee, and looks through the key-hole. "It is only Tom the pot-boy," she explains to Simon.

"Open door. Some schnapps," insists the old slave-driver.

Open the door? No harm in that, Tab thinks; it's only Tom. She turns the key and lets the lad come in.

"Some schnapps, Tom; plenty schnapps, Tom," Simon orders, winking at the pot-boy with a bleary eye.

"Money, sir? Pay to-day, trust to-morrow. That's jannak."

"Score him, Tom."

"Can't score no more, sir."

"Try, Tom, try."

On Tom going out with the empty flask, Tab turns the key to make things safe; and creeping back to the window, fastens her eyes on the man outside. Not twenty seconds pass before she hisses: "S...imon!"

"O. K?"

"No. It's not O. K. There's something up. Tom's speaking with the officer; the officer is giving him money. Now the lad's coming back."

"Mit schnapps?"

"I don't know. You have had too many schnapps."

Another tap is heard. "Dere, let him in mit schnapps."

Tom enters with the flask, which he hands to Simon, who, after shaking and tasting the contents, smacks his lips with a knowing wink, and offers to shake hands with Tom; a courtesy which the lad declines.

"Dat strong! 'bove proof. Goot healt, Tom."

Tom reports that a chap outside wants to speak with Simon; chap in smock-frock, under the tree. Shall he show the chap in?

"What chap?" asks Tab, crossing over and standing between Simon and the pot-boy.

"Chap there, sitting at the bench, tugging at his pot 'o beer."

"Did he tell you what he wants? You see, Tom, this is my private room, and men can't ask chaps they don't know to come up into their wives' bed-rooms."

"Said the gemman dropt a whip, and *he* picked it up."

"Dat my crack," exclaims Simon; "dat my crack vot I losh; fesh me my crack, Tom; fesh me my crack."

"Tell chap you'll see him?" Tom inquires.

"No," replies Simon; but the quadroon, pulling at the pot-boy's sleeve, patters to him aside, "Pah, pah! He'll see him, all the same. Tell him to wait a bit. This is my room; I'm putting on my things. By-and-by he can come up."

Tom shuffles out. Locking the door again, and turning round on Simon, Tab snarls between her teeth, "The sot! Trifling in all these perils! Simon!"

Starting from a second doze, into which he has been pressed by the potent Yorkshire spirit, Simon, hearing a voice but not catching the word, replies in his dozing dream:

"Joe vant a tip? Boss vant a shareman? So; I gife false tip, and get true baronet. Goot. Five hundred dollars: I vamore."

Opening his eyes, and seeing Tab near and in

front of him, he steadies his voice and waves his hand; "Fesh Joe; mus' see Joe."

Tab lifts her yellow eyes, and wonders what is best to do. To lie is easy, nay, is pleasant. When she has her choice, lying is nicer to her than telling truth, for she enjoys the sport of watching the perplexities to which she only has the clue. But there is neither use nor fun in lying about Joe. Things are too black for sport.

"Simon, Sir Leonard's not our man!"

"Vat, shpitfire?"

In spite of her love of plots, and of the power which her concealments sometimes lend her, Tab is driven by her alarm to put her obtuse and tipsy partner on his guard. Dangers are thickening round them. Joe is after her; set on by Leonard. If they catch her, she has little favour to expect. That constable from York is not far off. Here is an officer from Scotland Yard, and the appearance of that Cherokee assures her that the officer from Scotland Yard wants them about that matter of Caleb Clamm. Their only chance is flight; swift, sudden, secret flight. Going up to Simon, she whispers in a slow and menacing tone, which makes him drop his hand from his mouth, and spill his darling dram:

"Sir Leonard Lyle is not our man. You don't know him; I do. He's the devil."

"Tyfel! He no do for boss?"

"No. That's the man who knocked you down at Riverside; the man you charged with using a knife; the man for whom you asked blood-money. He will find us out. He'll know your charge was false: he'll see that your demand was base. You've felt his fist.

He was then a lad; he's now a man. How will you fare when he finds you out?"

"He no find out."

"The Cherokee is here. He knows you. He has seen us. He is certain to give tongue."

"Ve got some time; vere ish dat Joe?"

"Too late. Joe is after me. I dodged him in the copse; he never practised as an Indian scout; still, he has got a nose, and he will hang on the scent till we are off."

"Vat for he hunt?"

"Me; I'm what he hunts! His master wants to catch me. I have pricked his side. He smarts. That woman's Dinah Crump."

"Eh, vat you shaying? Dinah Crump?"

"The minx! I could not stand her airs. Dinah Crump leaning on my lord Duke; curtseying to my lord Duke! I glided through the crowd, crept close to her husband, hissed into his ear a warning that she is not what she seems. I stung him to the quick. He'll worry her with suspicions, and she'll never be herself again!"

A rap is heard. Tab turns the key, and Tom comes in with a whip, saying the chap outside has sent it, hoping that they'll stand a pint, and see him soon.

"Give him a pint," Tab answers; "and when he's finished, tell him to come up."

CHAPTER IV.

Simon's Plan.

DINAH CRUMP! This lady of Castle Lyle then is the girl that Simon has sought so long. He finds his runagate, in the high position of a baronet's wife! If he had only known this fact before Colonel Randolph fell, how much the secret might have been worth to him! Now things are changed. Riverside is burnt, the land laid waste. But still, those papers may be worth their price. How much?

While Simon, slow of process, turns this matter over in his mind, Tab flits uneasily about the room; peering through the blind; watching the man sip up his beer; listening for a foot-fall on the stairs; running her palm through the drawers, and sweeping up scraps that may be useful in her flight.

Simon sits stolidly on his chair, peering through an old leather case, and smoothing out papers one by one. He looks for some time at an old and cancelled bill, with this endorsement on the back, "Forged by Caleb C. Clamm, Banker and Negociant, Wall Street, New York. Witness to convict him, Simon Slokk." This paper represents for him that lucky stroke by which he lived in clover for a year. Is it worthless now and always? Shall he put it in the fire? No, he never destroys papers. There is danger in keeping it, no doubt; but every paper that is worth a cent is dangerous to keep. Who can tell what cards will turn up next? Here's Dinah Crump turned up in Lady Lyle. Two years ago he thought of putting her papers on the fire. He kept them; kept them in fear and trembling: for she had called him a "rifler of the

dead" but still he kept them, and if smartly managed they may now assist in keeping him. One, two, three, four—all right, as on the day when they were taken from the dead, just as he put them by within the shadow of Black Knob.

And now what shall he do with them? Here is the girl they have been calling Dinah Crump, whom Tab supposes to be really Dinah Crump. He knows better, and he holds the evidence in his hands. What is this evidence worth? That will depend on many things; chiefly on what the wife can prove, and what the husband knows. Suppose she has the wedding-ring? That ring! He looks at Tab, and curses her aloud for having let that prize escape.

"What are you cursing, Simon?"

"You. Vat for you lose dat ring? Give me dat ring, and ve are save."

The time has come for him to let Tab understand his plans. If not she'll spoil them. In her whimsey, she has stept between him and Sir Leonard. She may do so again. Even when she knows, he cannot always trust her to go straight. She has no sense of business, but allows her likes and dislikes to disturb his game. Though fond of lucre, she is fonder of revenge. To steady her, he must let her hold the reins. He hardly likes to tell her all; he cannot trust her tongue; but time is flying, and he has no choice. If any word is to be said, if anything is to be done, it must be said and done at once.

Curling his fingers at the quadroon, he draws her close, shows her the papers, and explains to her what they are, and what they prove; first, the sale and hand-freeing of the elder Tab Crump; second, the free birth

of Diana, daughter of Edward Wingfield; third, the marriage of Senator Randolph; fourth, the birth of Diana Randolph, his legitimate daughter and only child.

Tab stands before Simon stilled; nay, stupified. She has never dreamt of such a thing as Diana being the Senator's legitimate child. If that is true, Diana was her owner and mistress at the moment when she mounted guard on her in the negro shed!

"It's all a lie!" she raves and stamps.

"Taab, dat true; all true, but no one know; no one excep' ourself."

"Simon, Simon, are you sure of that?"

"Dere ish no oder proof; no oder but dat ring. Gife me dat ring, we can do mit her and her fortune vat ve like."

"The ring! Old Dinah's ring? Then I can help; here is Dinah's ring."

Drawing the hoop of gold from her finger, she hands that specimen of Italian art to Simon, who glares and stares at her, in his sullen rage, putting the hoop between his teeth, and clutching at his whip, as though he would flog her to death, for having cheated him at first, and gone on cheating him so long. But he is startled from this passion by a rap at the door, followed in a few seconds by a loud knock. In the face of this new enemy the folly of quarrelling over old scores is but too evident. Tab runs to the door, and calls to those outside that she is dressing, and will turn the key directly. Simon glances at the inner circle of the ring, and finds, as he expected, an inscription from the Senator to his wife:

FRANK TO HIS WIFE DIANA RANDOLPH.

"Vat dere, Taab? On shtair?"

"It's he; chap in smock-frock. He's calling on that affair of Clamm."

"Tell him dree minute. Come here, Taab. Are you ready to tell big lie?"

"I'm ready to tell any lie. What lie? Be quick."

In slow and semi-sober phrase, he tells her of a plan at which he has been working ever since the planter's death. Before that happened, he had meant to sell the family papers to Diana as her title-deeds to her own estate; but when the war was over, and the land a waste, he saw that the papers were of hardly more value than a title to so many acres lying under the waters of Ontario. There was just a chance of their being worth some dollars in another way. Diana was a girl of spirit. Even when she braved him in his drink, he could not fail to see that she was a girl of spirit. She was sure to turn up trumps. If so, considering her taint of blood, she might wish to possess the certificate of her birth. Simon was of opinion, from his reading, that in Europe no one cared very much about mixture of blood; but he was well aware how much importance is attached in Europe to honourable birth. He, therefore, thought his papers might be worth a trifle to Diana, should he ever find her out, as legal evidence of the fact that she was Senator Randolph's lawful child. In a strange country, no one was likely to raise the point. Such matters are assumed. Unless the facts be challenged, no one is expected to produce his proofs, but if the facts are challenged, every one is expected to put his questioner to shame. Suppose he found Diana married to a rich husband—say, to that young gentleman who had promised to be her knight? Suppose a scandal raised about her birth?

Papers that could stop that scandal must be worth their price.

Here, to his hand, are that lady and her knight; young people, living in credit as Sir Leonard and Lady Lyle. This lady, challenged on the credit of her birth, can give no answer to a bold and brazen lie. She will be at his mercy—for the means of her defence. He looks at his materials like a man of business. In the first place, he must have the scandal raised. Then, he can step in, and sell his papers. He will begin to work roundly, quietly, and in private; not with the woman, but with the man. That woman once denounced him as a thief; he must avoid her, and arrange his business with the baronet. Tab will be useful here, and what she has already done will suit the scheme he has in hand.

The knocking grows loud and louder.

"Ready mit lie?"

"What lie?"

"Shwear she ish Dinah Crump—a shlave, a bastard. Dat our game."

"I will swear it all."

"To him; not her. She know. Tell him she shlave; tell her she shcum—black shcum."

"I see. She'll answer to the scum; he'll take her answer to mean slavery and shame. This way; out by the back; across the yard."

"Round by de horse-pond? Goot! a shlave—nigger wench—a shild of shame! Shtick to dat lie. Hip, hip, hooray!"

CHAPTER V.

Lunch.

THE Duke conducts Diana to the great hall, in which luncheon is laid for the county, in a style of riches and plenty befitting a family that was ancient in the days of Lion Heart. A table curves, like a horse-shoe, from the centre, where the knight in silver mail presides over lines of knights in armour and ladies in brocade. Each man sits down as he pleases. Boggs, being sheriff, grumbles at the Lord-lieutenant of the county stepping up before him, and handing in Lady Lyle.

"Sit next to me on this side, sheriff," Diana whispers, as his highness blusters up, about to make a row; "I would ask you to take the other seat, but that I understand a sheriff's dignity is so high, that wherever he sits, that place becomes head of the table."

"What an excellent woman!" sniggers Boggs, bursting into the seat assigned to him. St. Leger, spying an old French standard, taken in battle by some gallant Lyle, and hanging peacefully in a rack, claps his Oxford wide-awake on the Gallic cock, and sits below his favourite bird.

Fifty knives are digging into pigeon-pies, and fifty corks are whizzing in the air.

"How many shall we poll, my lord?" asks Selph, the provincial mayor, elated by the fact of finding himself seated next to a live Earl; heir to the great Yorkshire dukedom.

"Bet you a pony, Selph, that I hit that fellow in the silver casque through the eye with this cork?"

replies the young nobleman, opening his bottle of champagne.

"I dedicate the first drops of claret to your majesty," says the Duke, parrying all references to politics on the part of Boggs, and humorously insisting that the whole transaction is a May-day romp.

"Her majesty is pleased."

"I'm fortunate this morning, Lady Lyle."

"In finding a good appetite on the cliff? One of my countrymen used to boast of an appetite, that, had he been richer, he would not have sold for fifty dollars."

"No; my fortune is in sitting next to you. Don't smile at the miseries of an old man of rank, Lady Lyle."

"The miseries!"

"I repeat, the miseries. Am I not aged? Am I not a duke? Those younger sons think it a fine thing to be born first—to be the head of a great family—bearer of the title, and patron of three or four rectories. It's a great delusion, Lady Lyle. To be a duke is to be an exile."

"In the play, you mean—a banished duke? Exiled in the forest of Arden?"

"In the forests of Piccadilly and Grosvenor Square; exiled from the brightest parks and best preserves of society. Where are you placed—supposing the misfortune of a strawberry leaf? Shoved to a corner, called the top, where all the ghosts are gathered round you, phantoms of the night, who peck and jabber while you eat. Look at my case. I'm seventy-five—at least. There are now living six dowagers of my rank. Three of them go out. Every time I dine in society, I have

to sit next to one of these divine creatures. I have nothing to say to them; they have nothing to say to me. What we ever had to say was said, aye, every word of it—more than fifty years ago. Yet I cannot escape them. If they were my wives, I might have a chance of getting a divorce, but having been somebody else's wives, I have no means of driving them away. One squints, and one is deaf. Fates, furies, harpies—they are always at me, nudging my side, and grinning in my teeth. Now, Lady Lyle, you see how much I have to thank Heaven for on this merry May-day."

Diana peeps at his Grace, catching with her rapid glance the twitch of mirth in his eye, as he goes on:—

"Yes, Lady Lyle, to be a baron is bad enough; to be a duke is horrid. You are driven away from that middle part of every table, where the clever men and pretty women always sit. Cursed with a coronet, you miss the sparkling sayings and the happy faces. Now and then you catch the rippling laughter, and you grudge the joke that might have given your wine some zest, and see, afar off, the merry faces, that might otherwise have come to you again in dreams. When you grow up, don't be a duke. There's nothing, Lady Lyle, like being a baronet—except a baronet's wife."

The sheriff listens to this gossip in a rigid, inattentive mood, thinking the Duke is laughing at the company, and he is angry with Lady Lyle for laughing at such wretched drivel. As a practical man, Boggs means business. He has not come twenty miles to hear jokes and endure nonsense. Lifting up his huge trunk, so as to be seen along the tables, he informs

the company that they have a duty to perform, and that he, as sheriff of the county, means to exercise his right of calling them to order. It is first to fill their glasses.

"Hear, hear! Best thing said yet!" shout a dozen of his nearer neighbours, and amid the clink of decanters, Boggs informs the company that he is a man of few words. Finding that announcement cheered by a distinct round of applause, he ends by proposing "Success to the Conservative cause!" coupling his toast with the names of their future members,—Sir Leonard Lyle and Lord St. Leger.

Leonard nods to St. Leger, but St. Leger waives his right in favour of the host, and as the cries for "Lyle, Lyle!" grow stormy, Leonard springs to his feet, and fronts the roar of approbation, never so hearty, even at election time, as when the wine is good, and no one has to pay the bill.

"My lords and gentlemen of the county," Leonard begins, in slow, sonorous phrases, to which Diana listens with a burning cheek: "You are good enough to say you want me. Here I am! (Hear, hear!) When England wants a man, it is that man's business to be there. (Bravo!) These are my politics. We are all Conservatives at Castle Lyle. What do we mean by that? We mean that we are English born, and hold our birth-right as the noblest gift on earth. (Hooray!) England is our native land. We found her great, and mean to leave her no less great; we found her free, and mean to leave her no less free; we found her safe, and mean to leave her no less safe. (Hooray! And so we will!) If any insolent and cunning knave, whether cowed by craven heart, or bribed to treachery by

foreign gold, should try to shear her greatness by one rod, should tamper with her freedom by one line, should peril her security by one jot—that insolent and cunning knave will find one enemy the more in Leonard Lyle.”

“Hooray! he’ll do it!” scream the company, rising to their feet, clinking their glasses, and tossing off their wine.

Above the din of voices rises the cry of Lord St. Leger—

“Ditto to my cousin Leonard—cock-a-doodle-doo!”

CHAPTER VI.

Uncle John.

SLIPPING from her chair, casting a smile on Boggs, dropping half a satirical curtsey to his Grace, Diana leaves the wassailers to their carouse. Going idly, and by roundabouts, to her bower above the garden, she dawdles over a bunch of flowers, pricks her piano into merry voice, listens to the rollers breaking on the sands below, and peeps through a slit in the wall, built for more deadly archery than ladies’ eyes, on the beds and banks of flowers which lean against the cope. Eh! No? Yes. That must be Uncle John. How changed he is! Well, it is eight years since she saw him last. She also must be changed since then. Changed? Why, she was then a child; a school-girl in a frock. But still she is not changed like Uncle John. His hair and beard are white. His head bends forward; but the old staid kind of power is there. One need not ask his name, in order to understand that there stands one of the kings of men. He’s leaning on a bench, absorbed in thought.

Gliding down the steps, and turning round a rose-bush into the secluded part of the garden where he stands, Diana runs to him unseen, holds out her two hands towards his, and puts her cheek up prettily for a kiss. The soldier looks at her an instant, crushing her tiny fingers in his palm, and then, with quickening light in his grey eyes, bends to her cheek, and kisses her with the words—

“My child!”

Years are blotted out, and they are friends again; he strong and fatherly, she sweet and grateful; as they were to each other in the first weeks at Niagara Falls, before that cruel war broke out, and parted them for these weary years.

“I am so glad to see you, Uncle John, and in my husband’s house! Leonard will be as proud to give you welcome as myself. You’ll stay with us some time? Make it a long time, Uncle John.”

“Well, by-and-by, my child, if you will have me; but not now. You see what public business means. I must return this evening with the Duke.”

“This evening! Nay, we shall not let you go. Leonard must speak for me to his Grace.”

“A minister is expected down to see me. It is business that will carry me away; but if you ask me, I shall soon come back. I long to see you in your life at home. You’ve been a traveller since we parted.”

Taking a seat on the bench beside him, she inquires about their friends at the Fall. Pattie is still engaged, and Prue is waiting for the nice young man. Sam is reading for the bar. Yes; Leyden House is still a school but hardly of the old type now; the dear old

maid being gone, and the new mistress being less averse to taking in the children of shoddy queens.

"Forgive me, Uncle John," she pleads, perceiving his allusion to her former speech. "I was my father's child."

The General puts his hand up, as a warning sign. She smiles.

"We'll leave our shoddy queens alone. Since I came back to Castle Lyle, I find we also have our shoddy kings and queens. Why, Uncle John, I've just been sitting at lunch between a shoddy sheriff and an elderly duke. Nay, I'll tell you a secret: I have found that shoddy is of Yorkshire, not of Yankee growth. There are shoddy mills not far from Castle Lyle."

"She's not so prickly in her pride," thinks Cridge, who now runs back to the much easier line of their first gossiping words. "The Fine Art Club?"

"Yes; going on all right. Those sketches of the cataracts? Well, you could not buy a scrap by D. with a dot, for sixty dollars. As to Quiet Home? The girls are living there; and they have changed the name to Cataract View, in honour of a girl who once lived there, and by her drawings made many people see the wonder and beauty of those cataracts. One room is called Diana's room: the girls sit there to work and sing. There is another room——" The two friends look into each other's eyes. A name is written there which neither likes to utter. It is Mary. With a wrench, his Excellency gives the sadness voice:

"My child, she is at rest."

"Heaven be with her and bless her!" prays Diana.

"Tell me, my child," the General interposes quickly, "all about yourself. You are happy in your married life?"

"Leonard is so good to me, Uncle John!"

He thinks her answer an evasive one, but shrinks from pressing her too much. There will be time enough.

"Was that your boy I saw just now, playing in the bushes near the fallen tower?"

"A boy of seven? That must be Frank."

"A handsome boy! Called after your father, Frank, the Senator."

"Leonard would have a Randolph name for him. Leonard is proud of his connexion with my family—— What makes you start?"

"Hum!"

"They spoil me in this country, Uncle John. You heard his Grace?"

"Heard what?"

"His claim to be my kinsman, and to speak for me, as chief of my family?"

"No; I was beyond the copse. This bush is thick, and has strange tenants."

"Why do you turn? Have I offended you, Uncle John?"

"Let us be wise, my child, and drop that nonsense about families. What does *he* know?"

"He! The Duke?"

"What does your husband know? I speak of him——Sir Leonard."

"All——save what is covered by my pledge."

"Sit down, my child. Let us look straight at things. The case concerns us both; yea, it concerns us all——Sir Leonard, Frank, you——every one. You've read the message left to you by Mary?"

"I have read it, Uncle John."

"And in what kind of light?"

"It moved me, but not much. My nerves are calmer now, and under more control. Some time ago, when I was ill, I dared not think about the past. Thought drove me wild. But I am stronger now. It comes of living near a man like Leonard. I am drilling into form."

"There speaks my child! That discipline is what we all require."

"You are a man of great experience, Uncle John, and understand not only books but men. You know my case; not all of it——"

"Yea, all. What part of it is wanting, child?"

"You have a fancy—an erroneous fancy—that my birth is tainted?"

"Hush, my child! We must not whisper such things to the air. Who knows what listeners may be nigh?"

"This is my private garden, Uncle John: as private as my cabinet."

"More privacy, more peril. Stones have ears, and roses tongues."

"I understand. You mean we must not speak of those old times and things?"

"I do. The past is past. Have we not fled from Sodom and Gomorrah? Let us not turn back. Look forward, child. Are you resolved, in case you should be followed and denounced?"

"Yes, Uncle John, I am resolved."

"On what, my child?"

"So far as it depends on me, I shall be silent. If I am compelled to speak, I shall confess."

"Confess!"

"It is unlikely I shall be compelled to speak; but if I am, my safety lies in Leonard's love. You cannot dream how much he loves me, Uncle John!"

"That is a woman's fancy, not a man's. It will not serve, my child. No matter at what cost, we must be silent to the end."

"May there not come a time when I can tell him all?"

"Never! We have broken with the past. Egypt is left behind us: we are in the desert, but our march is onward."

"But the road is very steep and hard."

"The road from darkness into light is always steep: the road from bondage into liberty is always hard."

"If you could see things with my eyes, Uncle John!"

"Then I should see them as I wanted them. It is better I should see them as they are. I've been to Riverside again. I have taken evidence from black and white. I have read the parish registers. I have found out Jecks, and made a friend of him. He is my attorney now, and will do anything he can, in a professional line, to serve us. From him I have got a copy of Colonel Randolph's affidavit in our case. It is a brief and brutal statement, whether the things set down in it are true or false. But you must see this paper; it behoves us not to shut our eyes."

"The man is dead. They tell me, Uncle John, he fell in battle, fighting with a stout heart. I will think of that, and overlook his errors."

"Read, my child, and judge."

CHAPTER VII.

The Case.

RISING from the bench, his Excellency draws from his pocket a bundle of papers, folded like despatches, and selecting one of them, hands it to Lady Lyle, turning his face away, and pacing up and down the gravel, while with pallid cheek and haughty brow she reads this brutal statement of her case:

"COLONEL RANDOLPH'S AFFIDAVIT.

"Richmond, Jan. 1, 1865.

"The undersigned, George Randolph, of Riverside, Colonel in the Confederate Army, serving under General Lee, makes oath and says, according to his knowledge and belief:

"1. That the negro woman, Tabitha Crump, the elder, otherwise known as Contessa Tab, was a slave on the Riverside estate in the time of his late father, John Randolph, Esq., together with the whole of her kith and kin, to the number of forty-seven persons all told.

"2. That the said Tabitha Crump, the elder, had two daughters, Sally and Dinah, both born out of wedlock; the first by her cousin, Peter Crump, a full-blooded negro slave, living at Riverside; the second by Edward Wingfield, a white man, living at Orange Gap; and that each of these negro women was, like her mother, a slave on the Randolph estate.

"3. That the said Tabitha Crump, the elder, died at Orange Gap, and is buried there in the name of Tabitha Crump; and that her second child, Dinah

Crump, was allowed, first by deponent's late father, afterwards by deponent's late brother, to remain at Orange Gap until Edward Wingfield died.

"4. That on the death of Edward Wingfield, said deponent's brother, Frank Randolph, went to Orange Gap, and took possession of his slave, the said Dinah Crump.

"5. That his said brother, the late Frank Randolph, having a fancy for his slave, the said Dinah Crump, took her into his house, where she bore him a daughter, Dinah Crump, the younger; and that these females—Dinah Crump the elder, and Dinah Crump the younger—lodged in the house at Riverside until deponent's brother died, when they were removed to the negro quarters, and employed on the farm.

"6. That Dinah Crump, the elder, died in the said negro quarters, and was buried under her name of Dinah Crump, in the negro trench at Riverside.

"7. That Dinah Crump, the younger, while living on deponent's farm, took up with a quack, called John Cridge, *alias* Cherokee Chief, and eloped with him to the north, where she has impudently and fraudulently assumed the name of Randolph, pretending that her mother, Dinah Crump the elder, was a free woman, and the late Frank Randolph's wife.

"8. That the said deponent, George Randolph, offered a reward of one thousand dollars for the recovery of his runaway slave, Dinah Crump the younger, and that the said Dinah Crump, his slave, has crossed the Niagara River into Canada, escaping from the lawful jurisdiction of American courts."

On finishing her task, Diana looks at Uncle John. Their eyes meet—hers aflame with wonder, his sub-

dued and calm. He merely says, "Diana, when I read those words, the man who wrote them was already dead!"

Diana heaves a deep and thankful sigh.

"Leave him alone," continues Cridge; "it is our cross, and we will bear it as a cross. The Lord have mercy on him in his need! Now let us look at facts. I went to Orange Gap. There is a stone in memory of Tabitha Crump. There is a record in the book that this stone was put up by Edward Wingfield, justice of the peace. I went to the slaves' quarters, in the grave-yard at Riverside. There is a stone in memory of Dinah Crump, giving the date of her death, and stating that the stone was set up by her sister, Sally Crump."

"Well, Uncle John?"

"My child, we must not touch those graves."

"But I am not, as you suppose——"

"Hush, child!"

"You don't believe me — even you — who love me so!"

"Be calm; you must not doubt my love for you."

Lady Lyle sits down, and says:

"I will be quiet. Nay, I'll talk to you like Jecks. Did the attorney show you my letters?"

"They showed me one; a letter signed D. R. By another hand the R. was altered into C."

"Did they show you my last letter, in which I described some family papers, giving them all the names and dates?"

"Names and dates, my child! What names and dates?"

With slow, fixed emphasis on every word, Diana

tells him what she knows about those family papers, describing their contents in the same order, and with the same detail as in her reply to Jecks & Co.

Rising from the bench, his Excellency paces up and down in front of her, silent, absorbed, perplexed. When they were flying from Riverside, and afterwards at Niagara Falls, she talked about family papers; but he paid no heed to her, for he had formed his theory and assumed his line. Had he not heard a dozen stories of that kind? An instinct in all falling creatures leads them to ask for pity, on the ground of a catastrophe darker, more dramatic, than the actual facts. It is a strong appeal to say that you have known better days, and been accustomed to higher things. But Cridge, whose days were spent in helping helpless people, heard such stories once a-week. Though feeling that the girl would not try to deceive him, he believed that in her sickness and misery she had thoroughly deceived herself. This theory has not yet been shaken, but these names and dates are curious things. Diana saw that evidence of her mother's marriage, held it in her hand; nay, recognised the signature of Carey! Could she have dreamt these details? Carey was her friend; came to the house, sat at her father's board! According to her tale, the other witnesses may be alive. Grey, Lovett? There are Greys and Lovetts in Virginia still. Are all those details true?

"Not likely," General Cridge replies to his own query. "They are nothing but the trail of feverish dreams. She raved in her trance about midnight thieves! She babbled in her flight about spoilers of the dead."

His Excellency knows what tricks the imagination

plays in fever, and out of fever. If a man begins to brood on matters as they might have been, he supplies the might-have-been with details, and at length accepts these details for the facts. Delusion is the parent of deception. On the other side, he remembers that Senator Randolph was a man of genius, whose course of life might not have run on ordinary lines.

Cridge seldom takes much time to think, his motto being that he had better decide unwisely, and act at once, than dawdle over plans until the time for action is gone by. Now he seems posed, for, sceptical as he is by nature, and inclined by habit to reject Diana's fancies, he can hardly set aside that group of names and dates.

Turning to her once more, he says, "If Marian Grey and John Lovett are still alive, they shall be found. I'll wire to Jecks. I'll wire to Glaveston and St. Petersburg. Every corner of the earth shall be ransacked. People of the first families in Virginia cannot be easily lost. If Marian is in Texas, we shall find her there; if Lovett is in Central Asia, we will find him there. If truth is hidden, we shall bring it forth. Five or six weeks hence we may expect our news. If you are right about these names and dates, the lands at Riverside are yours by right."

"I am, and you shall prove it, Uncle John."

"One other word. Have you seen Tab and Simon?"

"No."

"Nor heard from them?"

"Not a syllable."

"Then they have lost the scent."

"You wrote that they were following me from Liverpool."

"They slipt me in New York; they followed in your wake; but they have missed the scent. I thought so. They have run too low. That gives us time."

"They are in England now?"

"Cheer up, and have no fear," he says, evasively; for he had seen them in the copse, but could not tell whether they were conscious of Diana being so near. "Simon is but a craven rogue. If they should find you out, they'll ask for money — hush-money. Say nothing; send for me."

"You're watching them for my sake, Uncle John?"

"For your sake and my own. Your cause is mine; you are my child. What father have you left save me? What child have I save you? God in His providence gave us each to each."

Diana puts her arms about the soldier's neck, and lays her cheek among his snow-white fell of hair.

"How good you are to me! how good you have been always, Uncle John!"

"My child, if they annoy you, send for me."

CHAPTER VIII.

Man and Wife.

THE crowd is leaving Castle Lyle as it arrived, with blare of horn and noise of tramping hoofs. Voices are trolling carols, all which appear to slide into "He's a jolly good fellow," and to close in a crash of "Hi, hip, hip, hooray!" As the last sounds of riot die away on the road, Leonard descends into the garden, laughing merrily.

"There, they're gone at last! How jolly, and what a bore! And this is public life! Di, dear! come out!"

"Leonard, I'm proud of you!" Diana greets him, coming from her room, and laying her fingers in his palm.

"Come, come, old lady—tell the truth. I've been making an ass of myself?"

"My knight of knights! You were yourself, and I am proud of being your wife."

As she is saying so, she stops and listens. Something is moving in the copse. Yes—no! It may be nothing but the wind. Yes, it is something else. It is the stealthy tread of Tab, feeling her way unseen, and trying to catch their words for Simon, who is shuffling in the rear. Diana sees nothing, but a shiver of apprehension passes through her frame. Leonard observes her. Each is trying to make believe.

"Di, darling! you are pale again! They've been too much for you! It was a long time to be standing in the sun!"

"The day is warm."

"These men have wearied you. But, Di, you ruled them like a queen—a true queen—not a May-day queen!"

"Air, Leonard! Let me breathe!"

The rustle in the bush has ceased; Tab having slipped backward, hissing between her teeth, "His wife!"

Diana moves apart, fanning her cheek, and trying her utmost to appear at ease. But Leonard's eyes are quick at reading signs, and he has studied every line and dimple in that face.

"She's seeking some one," he assures himself, by a second glance. "Who can it be. That gipsy with the catkin's snarl? What were her words? 'See to

your wife. She is not what she seems!' What can she mean? Pooh, why inquire? What can it matter? She's a wretched tramp, picking up sixpences in race-weeks by telling fair women they will meet dark men, and dark women they will meet fair men. Ha! there comes Joe! What news of that gipsy woman, Joe?"

Joe scratches at his poll, and looks abashed. He has no news to tell. It is a strange affair. That gipsy slipped into the scrub, and melted out of sight. He thinks she was an elf and not a woman. Why, he's known that scrub since he was born; crept in and out of every hole of it; and yet this creature got away from him! He's sure she sank into the ground.

"Then she'll come up again, my lad. Before the day is out she'll quit her hole. Mind, Joe, mum's the word; but keep a blinker on. I want to drag that gipsy from the copse."

"All serene, Sir Leonard."

And the oaf goes muttering to himself, "I like a thing as stands square, toe to toe, and hits out fair. I don't like things as slithers off, and when you think you have 'em, sinks into the ground."

Leonard moves towards his wife, whose face is now flushed and fevered.

"Leonard, dear! this sunlight scares—this beauty blinds me!"

"What has startled you, my darling?"

"You will think me crazed. If I were standing on my father's lawn, I should be certain there was some vile thing—viper or polecat—coiling in that copse."

"Stop, Di!" calls Leonard, springing up the bank, and pulling at the signals. "We must have the steam up. Vipers, polecats! This will never do. A pole! If any cat or viper coils in there, we'll whack her out. Ahoy!" Seizing a long stake, he dashes into the bush, laying on right and left, raising the dust, and banging the roses off their twigs, with a mock gravity and earnestness that bring the laughter to Diana's mouth.

"Thanks, Leonard; that will do."

"There, Di! We've dressed the polecat, now we'll have a cruise. A spanking run will blow these cobwebs from thy brain."

"You know we dwellers in the South are of a quick and credulous mood. We live in hoary woods, and cast our nets in haunted streams. A race has gone before us, and has disappeared, leaving us nothing but their ghosts. The hill-side speaks to us of departed chiefs. In every stone we see a shape, in every sound we hear a voice——"

She stops. There is a noise. It's Frank, tapping out a negro melody on his drum.

"Ha—there it is!" hushes Leonard, in his pleasant mockery. "A message from the Spirit Land!"

Frank enters, marching with a step, and tapping "Du-dah."

"Heaven sends him to my help," thinks Leonard. "It is just the thing to make her laugh."

Turning to the little drummer, Leonard yells, with a comic gravity, "Eh! what's all that?"—mimicking the tap of a drum at "Du-dah."

"You can't, papa. That's not the way. Look here!" interposes Frank, beating his bob-tail lustily.

"Hoo! Stop it, Frank! I hate those negro tunes!"

"I like 'em; Joe likes 'em."

"Joe! Here, Frank, attend to me. I'm Blunderbore; great Giant Blunderbore. You know what giants do?"

"They grind men's bones to make 'em bread."

"Now mind me, little man. If you drum any more negro tunes, I'll catch hold of Joe, munch him up into a black-pudding, and just drop him down long lane."

"You will? Then—there!" And the child strikes up, and runs off merrily, beating his "Bob-tail nag," and leaving Leonard in a pretended fury, with Diana laughing till she has to sit and hold her side.

"This nonsense does her good," he thinks, calling more loudly after Frank, "You rascal! dare you disobey a giant?"

"Leonard!" she puts in; "I'll take his penance on myself."

"You'll pay his fine?"

"Try me. What penalty will your highness have? A dance?"

She sweeps in front of him, and twirls the skirts of her long dress, with high-bred grace and humour.

"There!"

Brava! But his highness exacts a song as well. He had a favourite ballad which she used to sing for him, but she has dropped it in their wandering. Now, that they are entering public life once more, he thinks it would be nice to hear that stave again.

"Ha!" she cries; "then like our ancestor, who fell at Ascalon, we are to clothe our beauteous limbs in steel—ahem!"

"Madcap, that song made me thy slave."

"My prince! Sit here, where I can see you as I sing. That shall be my guerdon. Nay, you must not follow me! Sit there!"

She trips in lightly, passes her fingers down the keys of her piano, and seating herself, attempts to sing,

"The despot's heel——"

She trembles at the note, but bravely tries the next,

"——is on thy shore,"

She breathes and flushes at the cruel words——

"His touch is on thy temple door."

"No, no! I cannot do it!" she exclaims.

Leonard, who has been listening to the notes, at first with keen delight, afterwards in alarm and wonder, runs into the room, and leads her out into the open grounds.

"Leonard, I cannot sing to-day. My throat seems parched. No, no—I am not ill! But never ask me to sing that song again."

"No, Di; never. I was thoughtless—wicked——"

"Hush!" Diana looks at him quickly—earnestly—her soul going outward in her eyes. "You love me, Leonard?"

"Di! My darling wife!"

"Bless you for that sweet word—the sweetest ever dropped from lip of man. Oh, Leonard! if you only knew——"

"Knew what, Di?"

"Knew—my faults."

"I know them all. Your fault, Di, is that you have no fault."

"Ah, me! all love is blind!"

"Look, dear! if you would only fret and scowl, and tell some white lie now and then; do something for me to reprove and to forgive, you would be perfect."

"Hoo! The afternoon is hot!"

"Let's go aboard the *Foam*. We've seven weeks left of freedom. Get your hat, and give the word. Which tack? The Shetlands or the Golden Isles?"

CHAPTER IX.

Proposals.

"S . . . tand back! They're going in. No, he comes back again. He's signalling to the yacht. Now is your chance; now or never. I will creep into the bush until you call."

Simon steals slowly out, a little flushed in face, rather unsteady on the legs.

"My shance! My shareman! Five hundred dollars! Dere he shtand. He owe me dose five hundred dollars. How shall I begin? Nodings like my old plan. Ven you addresh a stranger, call him vat he most like to be. Ven he ish man of brainsh, addresh him ash man of money; ven he ish man of money, addresh him as man of brainsh. Vich, my young baronet? Vich? Dose fighting tyfel got no brainsh. He, man of money. Hem! A-hem!"

"Heaven's grace, what's here?" inquires Sir Leonard, springing down from the flagstaff. "Zounds, what man is this?"

Simon wobbles forward, meeting the baronet near the bench, which Lady Lyle has only just left.

"Excuse me, sir! Hev honour to addresh honourable member for parlyment?"

"An elector for the county?" queries Leonard, smiling at his strange visitor, and thinking he may have come from some place in the riding, and may have a vote: "what happy chance has brought you to my gate, in fact to my private garden?"

"Shance? Dis my shance. Business, sir, led me to Castle Lyle."

"Yes; may I ask—what business?"

Simon looks about. The young baronet, though civil, has a stern and martial air. He must be careful how he plays his cards with such a man. It will not do to say, "Your wife is a bastard and a slave," and then appeal to Tab in confirmation of his lie. They would be kicked and ducked. He must be careful, and must feel his ground.

"Business? To shee de place. A sharming landscape, mit the land and sea."

"There must be some mistake. This place is not for sale."

"For hire, den? Well, how much a-week for sharming landscape?"

"As an elector," Leonard ponders, "I must humour him. Look, my friend, this place is not for sale and not for hire. You cannot buy the land, and need not buy the landscape."

Simon, hardly catching his host's meaning, puts up his hands by way of query.

"How?"

"As thus. The land is mine; the landscape yours."

"Mine! Den I shwop."

"You'd have the worser part," the baronet laughs.

"Every, any fool might own this land; only a poet can possess this landscape."

"Guess, I shwop."

Leonard looks at him again. Swap? This fellow's no elector! He's some loafer on the beach, some vagabond of the race-course and the country fair.

"I'd kick him out, even if he had a vote. A public man need not be open to all comers like a public-house!"

As Leonard looks at him again, the figure of that gipsy comes into his mind: "These tramps all know each other—let me try."

Catching at Simon by the sleeve, Sir Leonard asks him in a slow and slightly menacing tone: "You've seen a woman here about—a sort of gipsy, with a swarthy face, red kirtle, yellow shawl?"

"Dat Taab!" retorts the fellow, for an instant off his guard.

Tab! He knows her. They are pals. He must discover more. "And who is Tab?"

Simon, having sense enough to feel that he has blabbed where he ought to have been discreet, endeavours to hark back. Tab? He has got nothing to do with Tab. It is some mistake. Leonard, on whom a light is breaking, catches him by the arm:

"No shuffling. There's a horse-pond in that yard. Who's Tab?"

"Don't shake me—and I tell. Taab ish my gal."

His gal! Then they are partners in some mischief. They are Yankees. He's a Dutchman; she's a coloured woman. They are getting up some plot to worry Lady Lyle. Perhaps they have come from Riverside. Tab? Yes, he remembers. There was a Tab at Riverside;

that "lying slut" and "negro scum." This woman may be she; that lying slut, who was Diana's drudge. If so, she hopes, no doubt, to worry and annoy her mistress. And the man? Her pal? There was a wretch at Riverside, for whom she lied and swore. By heaven, if this foul wretch should turn up as Simon! he shall pay old scores as well as new!

Going up to the intruder, Leonard speaks in a grave voice,—

"If there is business to discuss, let us begin on equal terms. My name is Lyle. What may be yours? Here is my card."

"Moosh pleasure, sir, to meet Sir Leonard Lyle. My name ish Shlokk. Here ish my card."

While Leonard is glancing at Simon's card, which puts an end to doubt that here, in front of him, stands the scoundrel who drew his knife on Joe, and brought the charge of stabbing against himself, Simon is putting up the card with an inward chuckle: "Always shwop cards mit people, shpecially mit baronets. Never know how soon you vant goot addresh. A baronet's card ish always trumpsh."

Sir Leonard feels no scruple in this case. These tramps are dodging at the Castle to annoy his wife. Such wretches often hang on decent people, and torment them into paying black mail. These rogues shall find out their mistake. Looking from the card to the man, he asks point blank,—

"Am I to understand that you are Colonel Slokk?"

"Dat ish my card."

"You are a soldier then? That's good—hi, hi!"

"Vat ugly sort of laugh!" thinks Simon, trying to swagger.

"I am myself a soldier; of the same rank, too."

"Vat dis?" asks Simon, strutting and blustering in a still more feeble way.

"You'll not be able to decline a parley."

"Vat, you shay? No understand?" sneaks Simon, beginning to think he will give up his claim for the five hundred dollars, and seek a chairman for his company in some quieter place.

"You shall. I have the honour to inform you, Colonel Slokk, that you're a charlatan."

"He's going to kick me," Simon grunts. "Now I vamore."

"You hear? You understand?" asks Leonard, in a cold, metallic voice.

Simon shrinks further back, eyeing that opening in the copse, his only avenue of escape, supposing he could run away from this young and agile man. But Leonard steps out in front of it, barring all chance of his slipping through.

"The rascal will not take my hint; he shall not quit my sight."

Dodging aside, Slokk murmurs to himself, "He tink me fight mit swords; me fight mit lies."

Moving quickly on him, and again seizing his arm, Leonard grinds in a deep monotone, close to his ear: "Where is that girl? Produce that girl. This grip will never slacken till that girl is found. Where is that lying slut?"

Shivering and shaking in the young man's clutch, the vagabond groans—"Dere, in copsh—about—about—in copsh."

Leonard takes out his yachting whistle, and in answer to his call five or six of his sea-dogs, dressed

in the Lyle uniform, appear. "My lads, a negro wench is skulking in this copse. I want the jade. Unearth her: hound her out!" The crew burst off, and in a moment they are tearing in and out, calling to each other, and disturbing every stoat and pole-cat in his hole.

"Look out, there," says Sir Leonard to Simon, taking his prisoner by the shoulder, and turning his face towards the horse-pond. "Make a note of it. Now, what's this Tab?"

"Let go my arm!"

"An instant, and no more. Speak, man! I'll grind thee into mud."

"Ashk Lady Lyle."

"Ask what?" the baronet questions fiercely, flooding over neck and face with a red torrent of alarm. "Lady Lyle! How dare you mention Lady Lyle?"

"You vant dat Taab. She besser know dat Taab. Ashk Lady Lyle."

"Again!"

Without relaxing his firm grip on the rascal's arm, Leonard pulls himself in. What does the villain mean? Is there some mystery behind? "See to your wife; she is not what she seems." Those were the caitiff's words. She knows his wife; his wife knows her. Of course. But why should Tab denounce his wife? As he is pondering, the crew come back, with news that there is no one skulking in the copse. At the same instant, Joe rounds the stable wall in company of Tab, whose wrist he has imprisoned in his Yorkshire claw. "Ain't going to slither off, and sink into the ground, this time," that oaf is muttering to himself.

On seeing Tab in custody, Leonard shakes his

male victim, and flings him off as carrion. "There! Thy road. Out, dog!"

"My arm! He break my arm!" yells Simon piteously.

"Out! Out, I say," roars Leonard, hurling him off towards the stable; "there, lads, after him,—the pond,—three souses in the pond!"

CHAPTER X.

Guilty.

A NOISE is heard in the stable-yard; rough shouts and merry; broken by screams and groans. The sea-dogs are on the overseer.

"S . . . s! My husband's voice!" snarls Tab. "He's taken. Game is up? His game, not mine."

Slipping away from Joe, whose grasp of her is now relaxed, Tab darts in front of Joe's master, with a menacing gesture.

"Leonard Lyle!"

Staring for an instant at his swift and slippery captive, Joe rushes at her again. "You bolt! Hold on, there!" and he grips her wrist in both his brawny paws. Leonard is lifting up his hand to Joe, warning him not to hurt the woman, when his sea-dogs come back, leading in Simon, draggled and drenched; the sea-dogs roaring at the joke and fun. "Soused him three times, Sir Leonard! Give him another dip?"

"Mein Gott! Dey kill me! Oh, my back!"

"My husband!" Treated like a negro and a slave! Is that your doing, Leonard Lyle?"

"It is my doing, woman."

"Why? What has he done? Where his offence?"

"He uttered and profaned the name of Lady Lyle."

"Hands off me!" Tab breaks off a second time from Joe, and darting in front of Sir Leonard, yells in her wild rage: "Call out your wife."

Leonard looks at the lying slut amazed. What insolence in her tone!

"Call out your wife!"

Her voice goes through him like a knife. She's but a lying slut; she's only negro scum: yet she may worry and insult his wife, who cannot answer her with gibe for gibe? To that end she is here; to that end she has laid her trap. With such a partner as that slave-driver, she will stop at nothing. It is evident that they are trying to fix some shame on Lady Lyle. They cannot do it; but they may excite her feeling and destroy her health. He'll have no noise, no scandal, in his house. Tab shall not see his wife.

"Joe," he calls to his servant, who has caught her by the wrist once more, "drop the woman's arm, and let her go."

Joe drops her wrist, and Tab is free. "Now, woman!" Leonard adds, in low and warning tones, "the world is wide. This little nook of it belongs to me: the rest is open. Go."

"Not yet: not till I've done," replies the savage.

"Not go? What are you?"

"That man's wife. I own it; I'm his wife. I have no shame to hide."

"No shame to hide?"

"No shame of birth to hide."

"What devilry is in thy brain? Out with it—out!"

"I have no shame to hide—like Lady Lyle."

"Black devil, what is that you say?"

"I am an honest bastard, and I own it; not a sneak and perjurer, like Lady Lyle."

"How dare you?"

Hissing in his face, Tab darts past him towards the spiral staircase leading up into Lady Lyle's apartment; curls her hand round her mouth, like an Indian brave, and screams in a high and piercing note, "Di—Dinah—Di!"

"Scum!" roars Leonard, following her.

"You call me scum?" Tab storms at him, facing round and calling to his people:

"Look at him, you skunks, who eat his bread! That's Leonard Lyle! A young man, a rich man, a baronet! He thinks he's a fine fellow; you think he's a fine fellow! Stuff!"

"Give she a souse, Sir Leonard?" puts in one of the sea-dogs, bridling up at these audacities.

"Hold off her, lads!"

"Hold off!" she storms on, fixing her fiery eyes on Leonard's, striking from them a fierce and wandering light. "I say, hold on! Gaze on him, towering in his pride, and see how he will fall! I tell you, skunks and vermin as you are ——"

"I'll clap a bit into that mouth o' thine," edges in Joe. Tab turns on him her white and snarling teeth, darts a deep, venomous hiss into his face, scowls with contempt at the boat's crew, and raising her right hand, finishes her sentence: "Skunks and vermin as you are, there's not one honest lad, wedded to an honest wench, among you all that may not mock and mouth at Leonard Lyle!"

"What can she mean? What nameless horror lurks behind her words?" he wonders to himself, his fingers clenched, his lips compressed, his features ashy pale.

"Scum!" she raves onwards; "you shall see the scum; the black and base-born scum!"

Again Tab curls her fingers round her mouth, and screams her Indian yep. A figure, dressed in white, a red rose at the bosom, stands at the stair's head, looking down into the garden. It is Lady Lyle; her hand on the balustrade, her eyes fixed stonily on Tab, a proud and patient misery lowering on her face.

"She shuns my gaze, and gives no answer to my look!" groans Leonard, turning from his wife, feeling his knees shake, and his nerves quiver with alarm. "The earth seems opening underneath my feet!"

While every face is turned on the lady in white, Simon edges up to Tab, and in a wet squeak, tells her the time has come for her to swear.

"Gife him de shame; gife her de shcum. Dat ish our game!"

"I will do it!" she rejoins. Gliding to the spot where Leonard stands, shaking in his suppressed excitement and voiceless agony, she whispers in his ear, unheard by Lady Lyle, "The woman you have married is a base-born negro slut! Ask her. She'll not deny it to my face."

With looks more eloquent than words, Leonard peers into his wife's face for comfort in this storm of pain; but only to find a meaning there, not written on that page in other days: a proud and patient misery which defies his skill to read. Diana neither moves nor speaks.

Tab is the first to break this silence. Raising her hand in an insulting manner, she points her forefinger at Lady Lyle, shouting in a voice which every one can hear:

"Look at her face: a proud and guilty face!"

A murmur of indignation rises from Joe and the sea-dogs. "Guilty face! Let's duck her in the pond!"

"Guilty, I say!" is Tab's retort and challenge.

"Lash out, Di, in thy triumphant scorn!" pleads Leonard, in a voice fast breaking into jangle. She appears to make an effort, but her tongue refuses to obey her will.

"Shame binds her lips," exults the coloured woman.

"Hush—no more!" entreats Sir Leonard.

"False wife!"

"False wife!" Sir Leonard snaps her up, his temples reddening with the shame of such a charge. "I fling that lie into thy teeth. Unsay that word!"

"Let her deny the charge. I say again, false wife!"

"By heaven!" he mutters to himself, in agony, "she hears that taunt, and does not speak!"

"I tell you all—and tell you to her face," continues Tab, "that woman laid a trap to catch this man. She caught him in her trap; cajoled him into marriage. She deceived him first and last. She passed for a white lady: she's a negress. She hid from him her birth: he was cajoled, deceived, betrayed. She stood before the altar a living lie."

"Stop, stop!" groans Leonard, with a frenzied wrench, and, turning his eyes on Diana, utters his last appeal. "If you have memory and conscience left, denounce this woman as a liar and impostor."

But Diana never moves her lips. With a slow, silent motion of her head, she takes the rose from her bosom, holds it at arm's length, and lets it drop to the ground.

"My God!" escapes from Leonard's lips. Names, things, ideas, suddenly shoot back into his memory. The lonely house, the hidden female, the secluded child at Riverside. O shame and horror, can it be? With one last gasp, before his senses reel, he cries, "For love of grace, Diana, speak!"

In marble coldness, and with marble pallor, she replies to this appeal:

"I am a guilty wretch."

With sudden stare and bloodless cheek, he staggers to the bench. Tab darts in front of Lady Lyle, and with a loud and rapid hiss, insults her with a gibe and menace:

"Scum! black scum!"

Leonard lifts his hand in anger, only just in time to see Diana swerve and fall.

"Help, help!" he gasps. "Help her—she'll die!"

BOOK IX.

P A S S I O N.

PERIOD, 1870.

CHAPTER I.

Removal.

A WAIL of pain—a low, thin wail of pain—ending in a burst of sobs, arouses Leonard from the stupor under which he might otherwise have reeled and sunk. Raising his eyes from his two palms, and looking round, he sees the quadroon still standing near him, snarling, savage, and alert, and on the grass, some paces off, his wife, prostrate, ashy pale, and in a swoon.

“Water, lad!” he gasps, signing with his hand to one of the sea-dogs; “water!”

Scarcely less moved than his master, the lad stares for a moment, catches the meaning, and slips away to the stable-yard.

“Hold on to her,” says Leonard, beckoning with his finger towards the quadroon, who shows no sign of fear. Less quick than the young sailor in seeing through shut doors, Joe is less perplexed and stunned by the scene. Darting at the quadroon, he catches her by the wrist and elbow: “All serene, darky. Not so fast. No slithering off and sinking in the ground, this time.”

Tab snarls and hisses in his face.

Leonard, after casting a keen glance at his wife,

runs to meet the lad, takes the pitcher from his hands, and, kneeling by the white figure, touches her lips with the cool fluid, and dashes some drops on her cheek and brow.

"Sir Leonard don't believe a word of all her lies," a sea-dog whispers to his mate.

"Not a single word of 'em," replies his mate; "not one, so help me heaven."

Raising her head a little against his knee, and chafing her hand, now chill as stone, Leonard takes off her hat, unbinds her hair, and wetting his fingers, passes them through her tresses, cooling her eyelids and forehead, and nipping the lobes of her ears. Her lips part just a little, but the blood is gone from them:

"She breathes! I think she breathes!"

Maddened by the sight of what she thinks the man's folly, Tab breaks from Joe's grip, darts on one side, and pointing to her victim, screams in mockery, "Did you hear? She owned her guilt!"

But Leonard never lifts his eyes from his wife's lips, which he imagines open more and more, and from her bosom, which he fancies moves, though he is far from sure. Would it were quick enough with life to heave!

"Idiot, are you deaf and blind?" roars Tab.

"Coom, all serene!" expostulates Joe.

"We give her three times three?" inquires the bo'son of his mate. Leonard pays no heed to her abuse.

"I bade you see to her," shrieks the quadroon, with a contemptuous glare at Leonard; "I warned you that she was not what she seemed. Have I not told the truth? Has she not confessed her guilt?"

Leonard hears a sound and fury raging round his head, but they are nothing more to him than noise. Tab is distinct enough in utterance, but his senses are engaged in duties which lie nearer to his soul. His eyes and ears are riveted on Diana, whose head he is holding softly, soothingly, on his knee.

"Who is the liar, she or I? Who is the false woman, she or I?" Tab storms along, defying Joe and the sea-dogs to do their worst.

"Lie shtill," growls Simon, as the fury passes near him; "dat make bad worse. Lie shtill!"

Tab only hisses in his teeth.

Still stooping over his wife, Leonard coos in her ear, trifles with her curls, pinches her ears, and flicks some drops of water on her eyelids. Yes? She breathes. Thank Heaven she breathes! There can be no mistake this time. She heaves a sigh.

Raising her head a little more, he draws her towards the bench, lifts her to the garden seat, and props a cushion underneath her head. Glaring and hissing like a demon, Tab glides up to him, and laughs in her fiendish mockery of mirth: "She has confessed her guilt; she is your wife—scum, bastard, slave!—Ha, ha!"

Rising to his feet, and turning round quickly, Leonard takes in all the scene—Simon and Tab there; Joe and the sea-dogs here; in front of him his prostrate wife. A soldier, trained in the art of seeing, judging, acting, on the ride and spur, he sees what should be done, and does it.

"Joe, secure that woman!"

"All serene!" replies his man, dashing at Tab, and fastening his claws into her wrist once more.

"No violence, Joe. She is a woman; hold her fast, that's all."

"He is a fool, but not a beast," growls Tab, flashing a less contemptuous fire at Leonard.

"Take her to the chapel. Mind, that she speak to no one; mind you, not a soul. Lock her safe in; bar the great door; mount guard, and wait. I'll come to you by-and-by. Now, go."

"Is this my wage for telling you the truth?" yells Tab, as Joe begins to drag her off. "I warned you for your good. Have you found me telling lies?"

"Begone!" he waves her off, not deigning to exchange a word; but she declines to budge one inch.

"Coom, all serene, old girl," Joe coaxes her. He might as well try to cajole the rooks and daws.

"I'll tell you where the falsehood lies," she goes on in the same high pitch; "it's there; in her you call your wife. You know it now. She taught you to believe that black was white. You see that white is black. She got you to believe she was a white woman and of honest birth. You see she is a negress like myself; a white man's bastard, like myself."

In spite of his disdain, the baronet cannot help but hear her words. "Bastard and slave!" he mutters to himself. Here lies the deep, unpardonable offence.

"She was a white man's bastard," Tab goes on; "a white man's bastard—like her mother, like her grandmother, like every one in the family of Crump!"

"Of Crump!" thinks Leonard, with a shock of misery; but he only waves his hand to Joe, who springs at once on Tab, clutching her by the wrist, and dragging her off into the house.

"Now, lads, your captive. Carry him into Rupert's tower. Lodge him in the vault; lend him a mat; and one of you stand on guard."

"All right, Sir," answers bo'son, while his captive, squinting round at the old edifice, and then squinting towards the vaults under Rupert's tower, sets up a dismal moan.

"Me go in dere! Vas for me go in dere? Me done nodings. Taab call dose names. Lady cousin call dose names."

"Who called those names?"

"Her cousin. Lady Lyle cousin. Dat not me. Me call no name."

"Cousin of Lady Lyle?"

"Not me. Me no cousin Lady Lyle. Tab cousin Lady Lyle. Tab moder, Sally Crump. Lady Lyle moder, Dinah Crump. Sally Crump sister, Dinah Crump."

Leonard stands still a moment, smitten by another and more fearful blow; and peering outward into space, and inward through the memories of years, back to the incidents of his sojourn at Riverside. The reverie passes, and he waves his sea-dogs off without a word; watching them till they reach the stones and shrubs at the entrance of Rupert's tower. Then, his eyes turn back on Diana's white and flickering face.

There is a stir of life. Under the blue eyelids he can see—perhaps it would be truer to say, feel—a throb and pulse. She will recover soon. What can he do for her? First, he must get her in. Should she awake? He dare not dwell on the ideas darkening in his mind. He feels that for the present she will avoid his eyes. He fears that in this moment of

her exposure she will shrink from him in shame. In the unhappy state to which this scene has brought them, the sight of him can only rack her soul. Yes; he will get her in; and spare her all the misery of a second scene.

Folding her robes about her limbs, he is about to lift her up when he observes the fallen rose—fallen for the second time. Unhappy rose! He picks it up, lays it in her bosom once again, kisses her unconscious cheek, and raising her in his strong arms, bears her with a soft and silent motion up the spiral staircase to a couch in her dressing-room.

CHAPTER II.

Resolve.

LAYING her gently down on the couch, he rubs her palms, listens to her breathing, slackens the laces of her dress, and bending over her white face, peers into the purple eyelids with a yearning and despairing heart. A bastard and a slave! How beautiful she looks, with her fair skin and tawny locks! She stirs? No movement answers his appeal. Her mouth is closed, her breathing stilled. She is not dead? No there is life; instinct of life; although it makes no sign. He waits: a long time waits.

A sea of thought is rushing through his brain. How can he meet this blow? How can he shield this prostrate form? A great and tragic misery has fallen on his house. Misery! If it were only misery, it might be borne. But this is shame! A slave—a bastard! Nay, it is the shame of shames. The thing is done. She has confessed. If she had not confessed

her shame, he might have lived in doubt; but her own lips have told the tale. A gulf has opened in the ground; a gulf that can be neither bridged nor leapt. It parts him from his wife; parts him from her now, at once, for ever. They may still be friends, but they can never more be man and wife. Even as friends they must live apart. Apart! aye, far asunder as the equator and the pole. A blow has fallen on them all; his wife, his son, his family, his own self. No one escapes the wrack and waste. But still, the sharpest pain must come to her. He is a man, and he can fight his way; Frank is a child, and he can live this scandal down. His family is old and rich, and in a hundred years these incidents of a day may be regarded as the picturesque legends of a stiff and sober line. But for his love, the pale and swooning woman on this couch, there is no happier dawn in store, no opening out into a brighter zone. Should this dark story get abroad, her life will be for ever wrecked.

By all his hopes in heaven this story shall not go abroad! He'll stop it here and now. He'll take the burthen on himself, and set her conduct in the fairest light. If anybody must be blamed, he'll take the blame of parting on his own head. He'll go away, carrying with him those witnesses of her shame. When, where—are nothing—so he gets away. These points are details. He resolves, at any cost, to shield his wife from all that tale of shame.

She moves? Not yet. More water to her lips, more friction on her palms. Here is her scent; her simple volatile salt. "Smell it, my own," he woos the unconscious ear; "smell it; the salt will do thee good."

Is that a sigh? There was a faint—a low, faint breath—as though she were about to move.

Glancing towards the door, still open on the hall, Sir Leonard sees in the distance that figure of the Silver Knight which is the monitor of his race. "Woman is weak, and man is strong," he communes with himself, though not a syllable escapes his lips. "My task is nearly done. She's coming round; she will awake; she must not find me here. What I might have done for her in other days cannot be done now. With that confession on her lips I must be hateful in her sight. The past is past. Even to see me now would wring her heart."

He listens for a moment; not a mouse is stirring. Then, he slips to the door, puts it to softly, and returns to the couch. "It would madden me to see her turn away her face from mine," he murmurs to himself; "she shall be spared that misery. Before she wakes, I shall be gone; it will be better for us both that I am gone."

Bending to her white brow, he lays his lips on the marble surface, in a slow, impassive kiss; as silent and decisive as the pressure on a seal. "Poor Di!" he seems to say, "I kiss her for the last time; kiss her in secret and by stealth; she'll never know it, nor suspect it; when she wakes I shall be gone."

Calling in Bessie, he desires the village coquette, now flushing with the pride of an engaged young woman, to stay near the couch, to get her lady into bed, and wait for the doctor, who will soon be here. Bessie, as he knows, is a good nurse, strong of limb and sweet of temper. Lady Lyle is fond of her. At first she had been rather shy of Bessie, thinking her

too light of love, too free of tongue. The girl deserved her censure, but in service she has sobered down; partly from the second mate ceasing to flirt with her: still more from the example of her lady's ways. She is engaged to Joe; the banns are up in church; in four weeks they are asking to be man and wife. Diana likes her now, not for Joe's sake only, but her own. Bessie is that village wonder—a reformed coquette.

Watching Diana's lips and eyelids, Bessie catches the first sign of returning life, slips off her robes, and lifts her into bed. Then she sits by and waits.

On going to his cabinet, which opens on the hall, Sir Leonard rings for his steward, and begins to carry out his scheme. He has already formed a scheme. With men of his direct and simple genius, to resolve is to create, and on the instant of his resolve being taken, he perceives the outline of his means for carrying it into effect.

A croaky sort of man, got up in starch and buckram, answers to the steward's bell.

"Marnish, I want you to assist me," says Sir Leonard, as the man in starch comes in. "Her ladyship has had a shock: a sort of nervous fright. She's been unwell, you've seen, for a week or more. The day is hot; these people have been noisy; and her nerves are all unstrung. She is alarmed for me. Two tramps, a white fellow and a coloured woman, from America, have been skulking in the grounds all day. You see, Marnish, when I was a youngster, travelling in America, I had a brush and tumble with these folks. I knocked the fellow down: that was at Riverside, where my lady lived. After I was gone, they

swore that I had stabbed the villain. It was all a lie: they wanted blood-money, as a bribe, to hush the matter up. They never got a farthing, but they frightened the poor child; and here they are again, with their demand for blood-money. She's a woman, and they've startled her. Marnish, I've got them safe; coloured woman in the chapel, white rascal in Rupert's tower. But it's a ticklish business. Now, I want to keep things quiet till the rogues are got away. I mean to put them on the yacht, and carry them abroad: all this between ourselves. Mum! take no notice. Leave Joe in the corridor; leave bo'son alone at Rupert's tower. They have their orders: if the servants chatter, stop their tongues; you understand me?"

"Yes, Sir Leonard."

"Then, that's all. Now, have the carriage out, and dress yourself."

"Yes, Sir Leonard," croaks the man in starch and buckram, strutting out.

"Yes, that will set the train all right," the baronet reports to his own mind, marking a first step on the road he has resolved to march. "In ten minutes the housekeeper will have got some hints of what is going on, and she will learn the details ere she goes to bed. To-morrow, Bessie will hear all about it; five minutes after, she will have told it all to Joe. There will be a secret in the house, and that secret will be known to every one at Castle Lyle."

He takes a pen and writes a line to Grace:

"Come over, Grace; come over, Warren. Come, and come at once. She's ill, and needs your care. It is a nervous shock—endured on my account, but she is far more hurt than I am. That's her way, you know.

She is so sensitive. I send the carriage, so that you may come at once. It is more serious than you would believe. Come!"

As he is sealing up the note, Marnish returns: "Carriage, Sir Leonard."

"Look you, Marnish, I have made you my man of trust in this sad business. Get into the carriage; drive to Lamber House. Give them this note, and bring the doctor and Mrs. Lamber back."

When Marnish is gone, the baronet notes his progress on the road.

"Yes, that will do. Grace and Warren will be curious; and are sure to ask a thousand questions. Marnish will be stiff at first, affecting secrecy and duty, but he'll let them see that he could tell a tale. They'll pump it out of him, point by point. When they arrive there will be nothing left for me to tell. They'll see things in a proper light."

CHAPTER III.

With Tab.

LEONARD rings his bell. A servant answers. "Go to the corridor. Tell Joe I want him. Bring me a lamp."

A moment later, Joe is in Sir Leonard's cabinet.

"Joe, is the chapel locked and barred?"

"Aye, Sir Leonard."

"And you've brought the key? There, lay it down. I want this telegram to reach General Cridge this evening. He was staying with the Duke, but may have left for London. You must get the clerk to ask by wire. If he is there, send on the message. If he is

not, address it to the American Legation, London. Read the lines, that I may see you understand them, and will make no blunder."

Joe complies.

["Sir Leonard Lyle to his Excellency General Cridge. "L. L. is suffering from a nervous shock. Would your Excellency do us the great favour of coming down to Castle Lyle at your earliest convenience?"]

"All right; be off."

Taking in the lamp from his servant, Leonard comes out into the hall, pauses at his wife's door, straining his ear towards the hush within, and then strides onward towards the chapel for an interview with the quadroon.

Unbarring and unlocking the oaken door, he passes in. It is a gloomy place, even in the height of noon; and it is now already past the edge of dark. Tab, crouching in a corner, sullen as a wild beast which has recently been caught and caged, sees the flash of light, and shrinks still farther back. Peering among the tombs of knight and dame, Leonard perceives the woman nestling in between two slabs, and beckons her with a friendly motion to come near.

"S...s! Shan't stir," she snarls.

"Come hither, my good woman—if there be any goodness of the woman left in you."

"I won't. You mean to beat me."

"You are quite mistaken. Look, I have neither whip nor cane," he answers, holding up the lamp, and showing a smile so frank, that it might have been expected to tame a bull-dog.

"What a handsome man!" she mutters to herself.
"Sure you won't strike me?"

"Sure."

"Then, I'll come out."

Yet she holds back in fear; keeping her body between the slabs, so that if she were attacked, she could only be attacked in front. He beckons her again.

"Suppose," she argues with him, "you have never had to deal with negro slaves? Never! That's it. You're not like overseers and planters. Why, you have the power to flog me, if you like. You mean to beat me all the same?"

"You're wrong. I mean to ask some questions; nothing more."

"Then—there!" she flounces out, coming close in front of his lamp, with a defiant air.

Pulling a pocket-book and a pencil from his breast, he says:

"Now, listen, and reply."

"It's going to be took down?" she asks, in her old snarling mood.

"Yes, Tab, I mean to take it down, for I must have it all in black and white."

"I don't like having things took down."

"Why not?"

"Because they'll beat me afterwards."

"What for? What will they beat you for?"

"For telling lies. When things were took down at the farm, some one was always flogged."

"Not you, I hope?"

"Sometimes one; sometimes another; when things are took down, you're certain to be flogged."

"Sit down."

"Where?" the quadroon inquires in some alarm.

"There, on that tombstone."

"On the dead? I won't. I'd liefer have the things took down, even if I got a beating. Sit on dead bodies! Why, they'd prick you through and through; worse than a hundred needles in your skin."

"Then stand, but answer me," says Leonard, laying down the lamp, and by a gesture forcing her to obey.

"Your name is Tabitha Crump?"

"My name *was* Tabitha Crump. I'm not ashamed to own my name," she answers pertly, putting up her back and slipping out her claws.

"And you were born at Riverside, as a slave on the Randolph farm?"

"I was born in Senator Randolph's house. I was his slave."

"Your mother's name was Sally Crump?"

"Her name was Sally Crump."

"She too, was Senator Randolph's slave?"

"She was his slave."

"Now, pay attention; mind what you say next. Your mother, Sally, had a sister?"

"That was Dinah Crump."

"That Dinah was her sister by the same mother?"

"Sally's mother and Dinah's mother was the same woman—old Tab Crump,—my grandmother, old Tab Crump."

"Was she a slave?"

"The Crumps were always slaves."

"Answer me, yea or nay. Was *she* a slave?"

"Old Tab, my grandmother, was a slave. She left her children slaves; my mother and myself were slaves until the war."

"And did your mother, Sally Crump and her half-sister, Dinah, live on the Riverside estate?"

"They lived on the estate. Sally lived on the farm; Dinah lived in the house."

"You have told me that you are the daughter of a white man. Do you know his name?"

"My father? He was Colonel Randolph. When George Randolph was a young gentleman, my mother was his favourite."

"Did Colonel Randolph ever own you as his daughter?"

"Always."

"Yet, when you grew up, I hear you ran away?"

"Not till he threatened to sell me with his other stock, down South. I ran away, just as young Dinah ran away. Young Dinah, that is Lady Lyle."

"And how was that?"

"I went off with a man."

"And the other lady, whom you call Dinah?"

"That's old Dinah. She was the Senator's favourite. Old Dinah was a fool. She might have coaxed the Senator into marrying her; she might have got our freedom and her own. She chose to die as she was born—a slave. The Senator was so fond of his piccaninny—you know what I mean; but if you're not going to beat me, I'm not going to vex you by mentioning her again."

Leonard is surprised. This savage has some moral sense. Pain, deep and very hot, lies close about his heart; but something in this creature touches him, in spite of her snap and snarl, and of that anguish in his heart. A passing thought—and gone in striking him—takes form in the query, "Is this woman wholly and

for ever lost?" In a more gentle, yet more serious tone, he asks:—

"Was either of those brothers married to his favourite?"

"Married! Hi, hi!" grins Tab, in mockery of his idea. "You've not had much to do with sugar-yards and tobacco-fields."

"Senator Randolph never married the lady whom you call his favourite?"

"Old Dinah! Never! No white planter ever married a negress and a slave."

"You'll swear these things are true?"

"Swear fifty times."

He takes out a Greek Testament, and holding it up to Tab, asks her if she understands the meaning of an oath.

"Yes," she replies, glibly. "S 'elp me, God."

"But the effect? Do you know the consequence of telling a lie after making an oath that you will tell the truth?"

"Shall be took up," she answers no less glibly.

"Yes, and then?"

"Shall be popped into the Penitentiary."

Leonard makes her repeat the whole on oath, writes out her depositions in a formal manner, reads them over to her, gives her the pen to sign her name. She cannot write. He signs her name, and shows her how to make her mark.

CHAPTER IV.

Secret Police.

A TAP is heard at the chapel door. Leonard, catching at the sound, comes out into the corridor. It is

Joe come back with his message from the telegraph wires. The General is still in the neighbourhood, but he is closeted on public business with a cabinet minister, who has run down from London to confer with him. He may leave to-morrow. If the case is pressing, he desires to hear again by wire; if not, he may first go up to town. Meantime he is wiring to a friend; in ten minutes that friend will call on Sir Leonard at Castle Lyle. He is a man of trust, and will explain things. That is all.

Joe goes back to his post at the chapel door. "His Excellency gives this friend no name?" Sir Leonard communes with himself as he walks back to his cabinet. "Who can he be? Call in ten minutes; then he is already on the spot. Where is this man of trust without a name. I fancied that a mouse could hardly stir at Castle Lyle without my leave, and here's a stranger in communication with a second stranger, close to my house, and I know nothing of the business that has brought him to my gates!"

Leonard has only time to lay up his book and take a chair, before a man in felt cap and smock-frock is shown in; the man who spent his early afternoon in smoking pipes and sipping beer in front of the Lyle Arms. Leonard waves him to a seat.

The man in felt cap and smock-frock prefers to stand. In hard, dry sentences, like the winding of a crank, the man in felt cap and smock-frock explains to the young baronet, that he is here by order of his Excellency General Cridge. He is an officer from Scotland Yard. He is attached to the secret service. His business (he is authorised by his Excellency to state) is that of watching a foreign tramp—perhaps he should

say a couple of foreign tramps—a white man and a coloured woman.

Leonard regards the man with close attention. Here is an ally! In his scheme for shielding Lady Lyle, his one weak point is that of how he is to deal effectively with those foreign tramps. "Go on, I pray you."

And the officer from Scotland Yard, now in the service of General Cridge, explains that he is employed in a case under the Extradition Act. He has been watching the tramps for several days, holding his hand, because the evidence against them is not yet complete. His watch is easy. They are common cheats, flying from place to place, evading debts, raising money on false pretences, bolting from taverns with bills unpaid. He knows of twenty such evasions. He has a warrant in his pocket to arrest the male tramp on a charge of swindling in Yorkshire; but his chiefs in London are anxious to oblige the American Commissioner by waiting for his proofs on a far more serious charge.

These tramps, the officer grinds on, arrived at Port Lyle last night, and put up at the Lyle Arms. The woman kept her room. The man came out: fell in with Joe, and played two games of cards. He lost his game, and ordered beer. He lost on purpose, for he wished the lad to drink. They talked a long time; about the Castle, the election, and the family. No harm was done; the lad betrayed no trust: he only told what any one may learn from the county guides. This morning the tramps stole out of the tavern, crept along the cliff, and got into the private garden under Rupert's tower. But they came back at noon for drink, the man one way, the woman another way. The woman was flushed

and hot; she had been raced or chased. They wanted schnapps; the landlady refused to serve them, bidding them pay their score and trudge. He (the officer) sent them up a flask; he had his orders and his reasons. They returned to Castle Lyle and they were nabbed. He saw the whole affair from an angle in the stable wall. Although he could not catch one word of what was said, he saw the lady swoon, the negress borne away, and the male tramp marched to Rupert's tower. He wired to General Cridge for orders, and his Excellency sent him word to place himself entirely at the service of Sir Leonard Lyle.

When he has finished, the baronet turns the matter round and round. These close connexions of Lady Lyle are tramps and cheats. The man is a scoundrel of the lowest stamp; swindling publicans, dodging the police. And then the woman? Even as a girl, Tab, he remembers, was described by her owner as a lying slut and negro scum. Born in shame, she is doubtless living with this tramp in shame. What were her words? No white man ever weds a negress and a slave. And yet this abject creature may presume to call his wife—her cousin Lady Lyle!

Like a soldier in the midst of action he must try to turn all accidents to account, so long as they go forward with his main design.

Looking round to the agent from Scotland Yard, he asks, "Have you that warrant for the man's arrest?"

"Yes; here it is, Sir Leonard."

"Let me see it. Hum! The woman is not touched in this affair?"

"No, sir; yet she's more dangerous than the man. He drinks; she don't."

"Is she his wife?"

"I think not; but who knows? They tramp as Colonel Simon and Contessa Tab; they travel as Colonel Slokk and Madame Slokk; one set of names for Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood, another set for Ramsgate, Southport, and Scarborough."

"But my point is, are they man and wife?"

"I think not; he says not. Such people rarely run into a noose."

Sir Leonard hums and haws. The officer asks permission to explain. This paper is a warrant to arrest Simon Slokk, otherwise Colonel Slokk, said to be a native of the United States, on a charge of swindling John Jones, an innkeeper in the city of York, out of twenty-seven pounds, six shillings, and five pence, lawful money of this realm. Here is a second paper, giving a description of his person and offering a reward of ten pounds for his arrest. On such a warrant he can be seized, taken before a magistrate, and committed to the assizes for trial. If the parties merely wish to give the man a rap on the knuckles, that may be enough; if more is wanted by the parties, then the experienced officer begs to point out that petty swindling is no very grave offence. Suppose the case were proved, the fact of there being no record against the prisoner tells in his favour with his judge. No judge deals harshly with a first offence. Slokk may get off with three months; he will certainly get off with six. He will remember the horse-pond: he will remember Rupert's tower. Who knows what he may do? It's for the parties, not the officer, to guess. At the end of his three months or his six he will be free. Short terms of oakum-picking harden and exasperate a man.

Seven years may break a fellow's back; six months only serve to stiffen up his spine. A man goes into jail a scamp; he comes out of jail a fiend. It is the officer's duty to suggest, leaving the parties more concerned to judge.

"I am obliged to you; what line do you suggest?"

The officer from Scotland Yard evades direct reply. An officer never gives advice; but being in the service of General Cridge, and having his Excellency's orders to place himself entirely at the disposal of Sir Leonard Lyle, he ventures to put the matter in a general way. Much depends on what the parties want. Suppose they only want to give the scamp a fillip? Mr. Jones' case will serve. One word, and Simon can be whipt away. But that will leave the woman free.

Sir Leonard winces, and the officer from Scotland Yard perceives, without being told, that it will hardly suit these parties to vex that woman, and yet to leave her free. Yes, he continues in the same dry tone, the crank being stiff, the woman will be free for mischief; and a few weeks later the fellow will be out again.

"That will never do," the baronet muses; "that will never do."

The crank is wound up; the officer has no more to say. Oh, yes! there may be other plans. His Excellency might propose some other plan. Extradition might serve the parties better; that is for the parties to consider. When his Excellency comes, they can decide. If the parties wish to have Slokk whipt off and Tab left free, a word, and it is done.

"You lodge at the Lyle Arms? Good. Leave me that warrant and the offer of reward. Good night."

CHAPTER V.

Leonard's Plans.

THE doctor and his wife drive up, as that officer in the smock-frock slouches past. "Strange person to be coming from the hall," thinks Grace; "the whole place must be topsy-turvy."

Hearing the grind of carriage-wheels, Leonard comes out to give his cousins welcome, and conduct them to his cabinet.

Having formed his plans in outline, Leonard wishes to engage his whole surroundings in the task of carrying them into effect. His thought is single, and his course direct. He means to shield his wife. Leonard is not a stoic, not an anchorite. If his right eye were to offend him, he might find the courage to pluck it out. If his child were to offend him, he could not find the nerve to kill his child. Diana has offended him; deeply, grievously, incurably, offended him; but he cannot cast her out into the howling deserts of the world. If she has sinned against him, she has sinned more fatally against herself. What he can do for her is little; for he cannot stand between her and the bitterness of her accusing heart. What can be done, he means to do. He will go away; taking all blame of their domestic rupture on himself. That is the goal; and he will march on it by any road that he can find.

The more he thinks, the more he feels that he is bound to take this course. Who is to blame? Himself. He recollects that pause before she gave her pledge. She told him there were obstacles. She implored him to allow her time. She wished to ask advice. He

would not listen to her pleas. He swept away all obstacles. He refused to give her time. He interdicted all attempts to seek advice. He made himself her judge. By his own violence, he bore her forward, till the thing was done for good and evil. If the end is evil, he is more to blame than she.

Though he can never live with her again, he can manage to make her days less dark when he is gone. A blow has fallen on them both; and he is fitter to resist the weight than she.

He puts the matter, quickly, silently, under various lights. It was her misery to have that stain of bastardy on her birth. She could not help it. And it was his fault that introduced that stain of bastardy into his house. If he had only listened to her pleas for time. If he had only asked her to explain the obstacles she feared. But, in his haste and passion, he had taken everything on himself.

And he will bear the burthen of this blow now it has come. A man, he can go out into the world, encountering scorn with pride and patience. There is a line beyond which no man dares to go in gibe and insult. But a woman has no cover from the venom of her sex. How could she meet the sarcasm of a sigh, the pitying rustle of a skirt, the poison of a polished phrase? No way, except by silence—by the silence, which in such a case as theirs, is moral death.

No; Lady Lyle shall never be exposed to that consuming blight. He'll go away. The world shall never hear one word about this shame. It is the man's part to protect his wife, and Lady Lyle is still his wife—the object of his love, the mother of his child. He will go away—pretending to desert her—and he will

let men think the worst. It will be easy work to throw the scandal-mongers off the scent. Nor can he count it much. Why, men have done such things to screen their friends. Shall he not do as much for Lady Lyle?

It irks him to mislead his cousins, but the higher duty, or what seems to him the higher duty, must be done. With men of Leonard's class, it is an article of faith, lying deeper in the masculine nature than the oldest moral precept, that a man may do anything to shield a woman whom he loves, even of a woman he has once loved, and has now ceased to love. Leonard is of his class; ready to face evasions for the sake of love. It is a sin, but he is only man. He sees his sin, but he confronts it all the same. "It is for her," he murmurs; and the man who is without such sin—without the feeling which might tempt him into such a sin—has a right to hurl his stone at Leonard Lyle.

"Dear Grace, dear Warren, thanks for coming on so quickly. She requires you both. No one, dear Grace, can do her so much good as you."

"Yes, Leonard, there is one—yourself."

"Not now, Grace; that is past and gone. You'll learn it all too soon."

"What mystery is here?" asks Lamber in alarm; "I'm her physician, and must hear the truth."

"It is a shock—a nervous fright."

"Yes, we have heard all that; but what is this you say about the things that are past and gone? What things are past and gone?"

"Bear with me, Warren; I can only tell you in a general way. It is a private business; one of those innermost sores of life, which a man hardly whispers to his conscience."

"Surely it does not touch your state as man and wife?"

"It does, Grace—fatally. We can never more be man and wife; but this I say to you, as Grace, our old friend, Grace. You must not seek for more. Wait till she rallies; she may tell you all; but I conjure you, as you love us both, and wish to keep the mischief down, that you will close your lips on this affair, and even stay her tongue should she begin to speak. Let her grow strong; then you will learn it all."

"Assure me, first, that she has not been doing wrong?"

"No, Grace! The misery is mine, the expiation mine. Let this content you, as regards your friend. I am to blame. Is that enough? I lay no blame on her. Ask me no more. Keep silent. If you are ever forced to speak with her—say in all tenderness, that I own my fault, and she has nothing more to fear."

When Grace and Warren leave the cabinet for Diana's room, Leonard resumes the study of his plans. So far, the matter is in train. The servants see she has received a shock, and understand it as a fright on his account. The rogues are caught, and may be put on board his yacht. He'll carry them to foreign parts. When that event comes off, no one will feel surprise. Then, as to Grace and Warren, they have got a theory in their heads—a theory to explain events which must soon occur. Their theory will spread, till all the world believes it true. So far his road is made.

As to himself? In person, he has cut himself away from Lady Lyle. But in his heart? There, he can never be divorced. He loves her. Accidents of time and place have hardly anything to do with love. They

make a difference in his acts, but none whatever in his heart. To him, Diana is as quick, as warm, as bright, as though she were a princess born, with pedigree going back untainted to a Cæsar; yet he cannot, dare not, live with her again. He thought her true. She is untrue. He thought her pure, and she is streaked and stained. But though he cannot live with her, he'll not deprive her by one jot of that which she has long enjoyed. She shall still be Lady Lyle. Rank, wealth, attendance, and respect, shall all be hers. Except his company, nothing shall be lost. What is to-day shall be to-morrow. He will be gone, and that is all. The change is much, he is aware. No pride of meekness comes into his head, suggesting that her tears will soon be dried, and that the days will come and go with her as in their bridal time. He feels, too deeply, that her day will be very dark, her life very bitter. To him, they will be so; and what he feels, he knows that she will also feel. Yet he must go; for her sake he must go. The scandal must be stayed, the scandal makers gagged. To gag these vagrants, he must have them in his power. Simon in York jail for six months will not do. Tab would be free for mischief. He must have them on the yacht. But how? Unwilling to kidnap, he must either frighten or persuade. This warrant, of no use to him directly, may assist him indirectly. Once they are got on board the *Foam*, he'll run her out to sea. No matter, now, what course she steers; east, west, north, south—all points of the compass are the same to him. He'll lead the rogues a dance. He'll drench their hides, and tan their cheeks.

Some glimmer of a hope remains, that all these

passages are but a dream—a night-mare that will pass away, flying before the dawn of a yet brighter day. Oh, would they were that vanishing ghost!

At any rate, he'll put a breadth of sea between these accusers of his wife and the world in which Diana moves.

From midnight to early dawn he spends in writing to his lawyers, Grough and Co. of Gray's Inn Square. They are his agents, and he sends them orders to prepare two legal instruments, and bring them down, as quickly as they can, to Castle Lyle. These instruments, for which minute particulars are given, are—first, Sir Leonard's will; second, a deed of separation from Lady Lyle.

CHAPTER VI.

Lady Lyle.

WHEN Diana wakes from her troubled dream, it is early morning, but the blinds are closely drawn. Grace is sitting by her side, and Bessie moving silently about her room. Where is she? Aye; it comes to her oddly. She is at Niagara, fagged by her ride and sail; jolted out of joint by the rough train. There's Prue. Stay—that's not Prue. That's Grace! Well, Grace is always in her room. Dear Grace!

No words are spoken, but the watcher is aware of something moving in the bed. She rises gently, saying, "that's dearest dear!"

Her patient floats away again, her spirit bounding into space. Noting a flutter in Diana's eyelids, Grace imagined she was going to wake, and when the flutter dies out, and the purple eyelids sink into their former

state, she gets alarmed and sends for Lamber. "Fetch the doctor, Bessie; you will find him either in the gun-room or Sir Leonard's cabinet."

Bessie taps at Sir Leonard's door, but no one answers her, and seeing the door ajar, she pushes and looks in. Sir Leonard is alone, leaning his temples in his hands. "Poor master, he is ill, too!" sighs the girl, retreating quickly, lest he should look up. Lamber meets her in the hall, coming from the corridor leading to Lady Lyle's bower, and carrying a portrait in his hand. It is a rough sketch of a boy of twenty summers, which the doctor means to hang as a charm in front of his patient's pillow, so that when she wakes, her eyes may rest on that little sketch.

Grace tells him what has happened, and he watches for a sign of the returning consciousness. An hour goes by; the patient gives no further sign. Then, he leaves off, and fastening the portrait of that boy over the mantelpiece, commends the women to their watch.

The day wears on without a sign; but in the afternoon Grace is overjoyed to see her friend's eyes open quietly in a natural way.

"O, dearest dear!"

"Grace! that's you? What is the time? Where are we? Not in Leyden House?"

"My darling! We're at home."

A minute later Lamber creeps into the room on tip-toe: "Hush! keep quiet—hush!"

He feels her pulse, and looks into her eyes. A little food is given, a bar of light let in; but any talk above a whisper is put down. Four or five minutes she remains awake, then lapses back into her dreams;

awakes again in four or five hours, takes simple food, and sleeps again.

The next day, she is better, and begins to recollect. At length she sees how matters stand. There was a scene; she fainted, and was carried in. When was it? No; she will not ask. There's Grace. She'll want to pry. No; better wait and see. Where's Leonard? Not about. That is the portrait. Who has brought it from her bower? A kindly act, but hardly Leonard's. If the dear original were here, that copy would be nothing. Then, he is not here. Will he ever be here again?

Turning her face to the wall, she sinks into a sleep. When she awakes next day—the third day since her shock—she looks the situation more directly in the face. The tale is told, the secret out. He knows her now; knows of her taint of blood; the head and front of her offence. Not in the way she could have wished, has it come out. We erring children of the earth are seldom suffered to select the way in which our ugly sores shall be exposed to view. Some happy morning in her garden, when Leonard sprang to her with his freshly-gathered rose; some tender noontide in the yacht, as they were hushing the delicious silence; some romantic evening on the balcony of their room, as they were watching the starry pomp come forth: at such a time, she might have nestled to his side, and with a look of misery have told him all, and thrown herself on his abounding love. There would have been a time for her to speak. They must have been alone. She might have twined her arms about his neck, and clung to him until he kissed away her tears, and hugged her, even with her taint of blood, yet closer to his heart.

Such was, in truth, the scene for which she had prepared her mind; a scene of privacy and silence, with no listeners to her sad confession save the angels who could read her conscience and record the purity of her faith. But she was not to shape her course. Heaven's will, not hers, has now been done. She bows her head, and says, "So let it be." Even if her heart were swollen with pride—and it is very low and meek—she sees that what is done can never be undone. Why bruise her head against the rock?

She was sitting in her room, about to change her white dress for a yachting costume, when the negro woman's first scream in the garden startled her. It was an Indian note; unheard in any place except where redskin braves have hunted scalps. "Can that be Tab?" she asked herself. "It must be Tab. Who can it be but Tab?"

If so, she answered her own thought, the time had come. But was it come at once? Yes, now; that cry meant nothing else. She might be forced to speak and act. What should she say, what do? Her mind was clear. She could not palter with the truth. She would not hide the truth. If she were challenged to confess, she must confess her fault. The highest of all duties—to be true to her own soul—had to be done. Her mother's grave might be disturbed, but she must speak the truth. The heavens might fall, but she must speak the truth. So she went out, so acted, and so fell.

There was no time for shading off the uglier edges of her case. That there was much to say in her defence, she knew; but how, in such a presence and in such a tempest, could she urge her mitigating pleas?

And what are the results? She dares not question Grace. Grace, she is sure, is in the dark. Warren, she fancies, knows no more than Grace. Leonard is just, and in his justice may be stern; justice is always stern. But he is not the man to call in witnesses between himself and wife. Where is he? Gone or going; she is sure of that. She has offended him beyond forgiveness. Idly, as she now perceives, she has been dreaming that his prejudices on the score of blood were less intense than those of other men. How fondly has she treasured up his words at Jericho! But it was all a dream. On that point, he is mortal, like the rest of men. And, then, consider the accusers! For a proud man what a galling insult! Scum—black scum! There were the words she caught; the words which wrung from her that bitter cry of guilty! How they must have stung his flesh, and seared his brain! O, grace of heaven! if all the skies would fall on her, and crush her, she might be at peace!

Opening her eyes, she finds the doctor bending near her face:

“Quick, Grace; it’s over; bring me the cordial. She must take some drops, and get into an easier sleep.”

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Grough.

DAWN is passing into day—the fourth day since the garden scene—as Joe slips into the hall on tiptoe. Leonard is sitting on a bench, his head on a table, and apparently asleep.

“Eh? All serene?” yawns Joe, in accents anything

but serene. "He hangs about this place all night, more like one o' them ghosts than like a chap in his seven senses. Ghosts! I rayther not be a ghost where he is!"

"Who's there?" asks Leonard, lifting up his head.

"Joe, Sir; all serene."

"The train is not yet due, Joe? Look and see. Aye—good. Now to thy post, lad, and keep an eye on all these traps. I cannot tell when we may have to start."

The traps are odds and ends of personal luggage: hat-boxes, valises, gun-cases, and the like; all being littered about the chairs and benches.

Joe trips to the corridor, where the quadroon is locked in the chapel; and Leonard, after listening at a certain door, sighs in his misery, "Five days ago! It is an age since then. We were so happy in that golden prime! Gone now; a sail into the night." Slowly he wanders to his cabinet, and flings his weary body on a couch.

The opening of a door, the sound of feet and voices, break on Joe, as he is peeping through the keyhole of his chapel-door. Some one has come: the doctor, perhaps.

"Ugh! Get out!" growls this new-comer to some serving-men, who want to show him in, and carry his valise. "Get out! I know my way and need no help. Get out!" There is a hushed movement, as of servants sneaking off, leaving the emphatic visitor alone.

"Proud horse that won't carry his own provender," he growls. "As if a lawyer from Gray's Inn Square would let another fellow handle his blue bag! What's here? Boxes all packed and ready? Then Sir Leonard has taken no advice. Ugh! Hang his traps!"

The last words make Joe think it time to look about. Sir Leonard bade him keep an eye on all those traps. He'll go back into the hall and count 'em. Feeling in the dim light, Joe begins to number, "One, two, three," and then he comes on a valise which the emphatic visitor has laid down.

Joe scrapes his poll.

"John!"

Joe looks at the visitor and then at the valise. "I say, old chap, don't you belong to that 'ere port-mantle?"

"Ugh!" growls the visitor in his sternest tone.

Again Joe scrapes his poll; but nothing comes from it, except some stubbly hair.

"Hang 'em, they won't count up. I'll try again. One, two, three——"

"I'm come, John!" roars the emphatic visitor, driving Joe's unfinished figures out of his head.

"Coom! Don't you be a-cooming on it here, that's all," retorts the stud-groom, putting his leg into an attitude of defence against a man who mixes up traps, so that they won't count right.

"I'm Grough!" adds the visitor, in a patronizing tone.

"Seem so!" retorts the groom, resolved on giving cheek for cheek.

Grough expands into a dry, short laugh, peculiar to solicitors in Gray's Inn Square, who manage the affairs of ancient families. "My lad, I'm Mr. Grough, from London."

"All serene?" Joe inquires, cautiously, having formed a bad opinion of folks from London.

"Grough—all right."

"Then why not say so at first?" objects the groom.
"I'm Joe."

"Then tell your master, Joe, I'm at his service."

"All serene!" And yet Joe pauses, scrapes his poll again, and tries to coax that mystery of the extra trap out of the emphatic visitor. "Ax pardon, sir; but don't you belong to that 'ere portmantle?"

"No," retorts the visitor, with legal humour. "That portmanteau belongs to me."

A Yorkshire stare lights up Joe's eyes, a Yorkshire grin distends Joe's mouth, a Yorkshire twitch doubles up Joe's body, as he chuckles and approves, "Why, dash me, maister, I think as you be Yorkshire, too!"

Grough, nodding him off, opens his blue bag. "Here are the precious deeds. Sir Leonard must be mad. The will—and such a will! Ugh! A disgrace to draw it up. Grough, I'm ashamed of you and your profession. You, an honest man! You, a stoic and a philosopher, to pen such stuff! Grough, you're a rascal!"

Joe returns to show the lawyer into Leonard's cabinet. The baronet greets him with "a thousand thanks, Grough; it was very good of you to come at once. I hope the night journey has not knocked you up."

"That's nothing. I'm a stoic. I don't mind fatigue. It's you. How is it with you, Sir Leonard?"

"Ah, Grough!"

"Wish you'd take advice."

"Crusty as Diogenes. I have taken good advice."

"Then you have changed your mind?"

"No, Grough, I have taken counsel of my heart."

"And you are going?"

"Yes, Grough."

"Pardon me, Sir Leonard. I'm your man of business. Before you were born, I was your father's man of business——"

"Stay. You're going to lecture me. Don't I know what you would say. You are a man of sense, of straight and obvious sense. On any other subject I should listen with respect to you; on this I cannot hear a word. Good sense, the mean and poise of human things, the level road made sure by many feet, are what we seek in law: for other things—the light of love, the fire of sacrifice, the grace that lifts a man into a saint—we have to seek in our own souls. This is enough."

"Too much," growls Grough.

"You're old and cautious. In affairs of business you are always right; but here you have no understanding of the case. Each to his own, as schoolboys say. If you were young, in love, and in despair, who'd pay you for advice of law?"

"Excuse me. You are young. It is my duty to protest against the signing of these instruments."

"Yes, that is right; and now, we'll sign them, Grough."

"You think that generous and romantic. I should describe it by other names."

"Now, Grough, the papers. Let me see. This is my will? Allow me. Every point as I set down?"

"Sir Leonard, I refuse to be responsible for a word. It is your own affair. I merely penned the lines and put the matter into legal shape."

Sir Leonard reads the will, looks satisfied, rings a bell, calls in Joe and Marnish, signs the document in their presence, bids them sign as witnesses, and tells them to retire.

"Now, then, the deed?"

"Sir Leonard, here I must protest again. This is a deed of separation. It is drawn according to your wish; but I protest against it, both in detail and in principle. You rob yourself of house and land: that may be detail. You leave yourself without protection: that is principle."

"Come, explain."

"You make these settlements on Lady Lyle—romantic and ridiculous settlements—on her agreeing to a separation. That is all. No reason for the separation is assigned. You say she has confessed her guilt. You say that privately to me; but there's no record of the fact. Suppose she should repent this bargain, and proceed for restitution of her conjugal rights? Where are we? What is our defence?"

"My friend, this deed is meant for her protection, not for ours."

"Ugh! Let it be so; yet for her sake it were wise to have the cause of separation stated in the deed."

"Why so?"

"She is a woman. She will fret and worry, and will want to have the thing undone. She'll ask the courts to intervene. Then we must speak, and she will stand exposed before the world. If, in this private deed, the facts were stated, they would stare her in the face, barring all hope that way; and she would never dream of going to the courts."

"What would you have inserted?"

"Only what she has confessed: that she's a planter's illegitimate daughter and was born a slave. These, as I take you, are the facts to which her ladyship confessed?"

"Hush, Grough! These words must not be spoken, much less written. What is done is done; but she shall not again be put to all that burning trial. Let it stand as it is drawn."

CHAPTER VIII.

Will and Deed.

MARNISH and Joe are signing the deed as witnesses to Sir Leonard's signature, when Lamber comes into the cabinet.

"You bring good news?"

"Our patient's better," answers Lamber. "She'll be up to-day, and out to-morrow; in a week she'll be herself again."

Leonard rings a bell, and Bessie comes in.

"Is your lady getting up?"

"Yes, Sir Leonard; she is dressing."

"Lay this rose on her table as before. But not a word, mind; simply lay it down. When she is ready, ask her if she will receive a visit from Mr. Grough."

The girl dips and runs out, followed by Marnish and Joe. Lamber looks at his cousin's worn cheek and sunken eye. "My dear Leonard, this won't do, you know. We're not ourselves; we must come under orders. I'm your physician, and I say we must have change. Where is the yacht? We must go out to sea."

"How, Warren?" Leonard takes him up, with sudden light in his worn pupils. "You prescribe a voyage?"

"Nay, I require it. I've been urging it on Grace."

"You've mentioned it to Grace?"

"I've said you must."

"Well, Warren, I will think of it."

Bessie comes back. Her Ladyship is alone, ready to receive Mr. Grough. Leonard leaves the cabinet with his lawyer, saying as they walk across the hall:

"Yes, let her see things clearly, Grough; but use the softest words you can."

"Ugh! The man is born five hundred years too late!" Grough growls between his teeth.

Grough finds Diana in a boudoir, opening from her bed-room. Wan and feeble, she desires him to take a chair and state his business in the fewest words.

Seeing her for the first time, Grough peers and peers again, into her beautiful and open face. Gasping for breath, he wonders what it means; there must be some mistake, he thinks, some gross and comical mistake. This lady daughter of a negress and a slave! She is divinely fair; proud, too, she is, but then her pride seems born in her, and not put on. It is the grace and elegance of an animal of perfect breed. Her smile of welcome puts him at his ease and makes him feel at home. It is no pleasant task he has to do; but he is glad that in the deed which he has now to read there is no mention of this lady being a bastard and a slave.

"You know my errand, Lady Lyle?"

"Yes, in the main. The matter has been broken to me bit by bit; I am prepared to hear you."

"May I take it that—in principle—you consent to what is now proposed?"

"First you must let me see what is proposed."

"The question is of a separation as man and wife."

"If Sir Leonard wills it, I consent."

"These deeds are drawn on his instructions."

"That's enough. I am his wife, and I obey his will."

Grough asks her whether he may explain the law? She nods assent with a sad smile.

He tells her there are two kinds of separation, and she is free to make her choice between them. Separation of man and wife may be either judicial or voluntary. Each method has its merit and defect. The judicial method is public, the voluntary method is private. One is safe, not secret; the other secret, but not safe.

Diana looks at him intently, but without a word of comment.

Grough goes on explaining the law to her. "If you want a judicial separation you must go to the Divorce court, and expose your family affairs. The case is printed in the newspapers and law reports. The judge decides what you must do, and you are bound to do it. You are separated from each other. The woman manages her own estate, the man is no longer liable for her debts. You live where you like, do what you like, except, of course, such things as might be made the grounds for a divorce. You are not divorced, and you cannot marry any body else.

A smile passes over Diana's face.

On the other hand, as Grough explains to his attentive listener, a voluntary separation is very simple and may be kept very private. When the parties are agreed, a deed is drawn and signed. Each party takes a copy and goes his way. Nobody is much the wiser. Save the two who sign it and their confidential legal agent, no one need be told a word of why or wherefore. Under such a deed no change takes place in

the status of man and wife. They sue and can be sued. Unless her maintenance is duly paid, the wife can run her husband into debt. The woman's privilege remains. She has a legal right to bear her husband's name. The deed is not recorded, and it can be set aside at pleasure; if the parties meet, they can make a bonfire of the deed, without applying to a court of law.

It is for Lady Lyle to say which kind of separation she prefers.

"I think you have the deed already drawn?"

"This instrument, Lady Lyle, is for a voluntary separation; but Sir Leonard leaves you perfect liberty of choice."

"But that was his choice?"

"Yes; he fancied you might like it better."

"And I shall. Go on."

Grough opens the legal document, which, as he explains to her, is a covenant by which Sir Leonard Lyle, of Castle Lyle in Yorkshire and Grosvenor Square in Middlesex, baronet and justice of the peace, on the first part, and Diana, Lady Lyle (formerly Diana Randolph of Riverside in Virginia) on the second part, agree of their own choice and motion, and with their free and full consent, to renounce their separate conjugal rights in favour of each other, and to live apart for their common peace, comfort, and security.

Diana shrinks.

Then Grough explains the covenants. On her part, Lady Lyle agrees to live apart from Sir Leonard, in such place or places as may suit her health and convenience; she agrees to abstain from any interference with her husband's movements, and neither to seek his

company, nor trouble him with message or correspondence, but to regard him as a man separated from a woman by the grave.

Diana shivers.

On the other part, Sir Leonard agrees, over and above all covenants, to respect his wife's privacy in future, and to make her an allowance of ten thousand pounds a-year. He assigns to her for residences Castle Lyle and his house in Grosvenor Square. He leaves her the legal right to bear his name.

Diana stares, repeating to herself, "The legal right to bear his name!"

Horses, carriages, plate, and heir-looms are assigned to Lady Lyle's care; the former for her present use, the latter for the future benefit of Frank.

Next, comes up the will. This will is short and simple. Lady Lyle is aware that much of the estate is entail; when Sir Leonard dies, that property goes to Frank. Nobody can divert that part of the estate, which takes in Castle Lyle and nearly all the Yorkshire lands. But there is property besides; money in consols, houses in London, moors in Argyle, railway shares and foreign stock. More than half Sir Leonard's income is derived from property existing in this handier shape. By the provisions of this will, Grough adds, she is left his sole residuary legatee.

Diana starts.

Nor is that all, continues Grough. Sir Leonard, by these instruments, creates Lady Lyle sole guardian of his son and heir, Frank Lyle, at this time seven years old, until the boy shall be of legal age.

"He leaves me Frank?"

"By these covenants, Lady Lyle, he leaves him wholly in your custody and charge."

Diana shuts her eyes and gasps for breath.

"It is too much!" she murmurs. "Send my maid; there, leave me for a while. I'll speak with you—aye, by-and-by."

CHAPTER IX.

The Cabinet.

GROUGH has hardly returned to Sir Leonard's cabinet, and finished his report to his employer, when the door is pushed in from the outer side, without a rap or tap, and the wan figure of Lady Lyle is seen standing in the open space, cutting against the statue of the Silver Knight. Leonard looks surprised and pained.

"I pray you in your courtesy," she pleads with Grough, lifting the paper in her hand by way of sign—"I pray you, that we may be left alone. It is a little thing I ask; you need not wander far; I shall not keep you long. Come, when you hear the bell."

Grough rises, bows, and creeps out, rather cowed by this strange woman, of whom only an hour ago he was ready to believe anything bad, even that her face was as black as he thought her heart must be. "Base-born—black scum!" he now mumbles; "hang me, if I can make her out."

She watches him creep off and put the door to softly, contrary to his usual style; and then she turns towards Leonard, fixing her eyes on him in a long and silent gaze. His face is bent, but he is conscious of her sad, inquiring look. When hearts are in accord, as his and hers were wont to be, silence is bliss.

When hearts are jarred, as his and hers are now, silence is agony. Diana is the first to speak:

"Leonard!"

"I would have spared you any more such scenes," he answers, shrinking from her gaze, not daring to encounter eye with eye, lest something in his purpose may be marred.

"Oh, Leonard, I have done you wrong; such wrong as noble natures cannot brook. I know my fault; I come to own it; I am utterly unworthy to have been your wife. My silence—my reserve—Oh, Leonard!"

He lifts his brows to her a moment, sees the red rose in her bosom, peers into her miserable eyes, and turns aside from her, shuddering: "I dare not look her in the face."

Quicker than thought, she follows that averting glance,—

"He turns from me! His heart is gone!"

No answer comes from his closed lips and his averted face: lips closed in pity, face averted in despair. The strain becomes too great, and she again breaks in, with sudden motion and appeal, flinging herself before him,—

"Fell me to the earth. Slay me in thine anger. I deserve to die. I shall be proud to die, so that I may be always near to thee."

"Lady, stand up, stand up."

"I cannot stand before you, Leonard. I am weak with my great sin. I stagger under it. My shame is more than I can bear."

"Hush! Speak no more. It is our own affair; kept for evermore between us, like a secret sin. No shame shall ever touch you . . . Lady . . . Lyle."

A wail of misery breaks from Diana's throat. He turns to her in pity, unable to resist that cry of pain.

"Unsay that word," she pleads with a slow and stifled utterance; "my sins are very heavy—but that word outweighs them all."

"Are you not Lady Lyle?"

"Leonard, am I no more to you than Lady Lyle—a woman with the legal right to bear your name?"

"It is provided in the deed; no court can take from you that right."

Diana feels herself repulsed. He chills her with his law, where he should warm her with his love. Is he already dead to her in soul? If so, why send that rose? If so, why all those gifts?—Ah, yes, those gifts! She came to speak of them.

"Poor rose," she sighs, drawing out the flower from her robe, kissing the folded bud, and laying it meekly down; mute witness of her first step towards that parting which Leonard seems to have in view. Then, opening the deed, she asks:

"Is this your act—is this your signature?"

"That is my deed; that is my hand."

"I am not crazed? You are not crazed?"

"I think we're sound in intellect."

"Then help me with your light. These papers baffle my poor brain. I've had strange dreams, but hardly any one so strange as the provisions of this deed."

"In what respect? They disappoint you, Lady Lyle?"

"For Heaven's sake, Leonard, do not call me Lady Lyle!"

"Wherein are they so strange?"

"Have you not given me in this deed the greater part of your estate—in moneys, houses, lands?"

"I am a soldier. I have hardly any wants beyond my horse and yacht. And for the rest my fortune's in my sword."

"I am to occupy this princely pile?"

"Who else should live here? Every Lady Lyle has lived here since the place was built. My mother lived here; so must Frank's. It is her home—and his. You would not have him lodge beneath a stranger's roof?"

"But, then, there is your house in town? Frank cannot want a house in Grosvenor Square!"

"The house in town must go with Castle Lyle. Who should reside there, if not you and Frank?"

"You should!"

"I shall have no occasion for a house in London."

"No! Why not?"

"I'm going to make another voyage."

"Only for a week or two. Grace told me you were ordered on a cruise, but only for some ten or twenty days?"

"I shall not want a house in town."

"Not in the session? Surely, in the session you will want a house in town?"

"That dream is gone. It was a dream; a May-day dream; but it is gone."

"Then, you are leaving England for a long time?"

"Yes; our stars will have it so; one kingdom cannot hold us now."

"Not hold us!"

"You and me. My duty is to go."

"Indeed! Is it in very deed? There is one other point, and I have done. You would not have me sign in ignorance of what is meant?"

"No, Lady——"

"Hush! I cannot bear that now. You leave to me the custody of our child?"

"That is your right; the mother's sacred right."

With a great burst of pent-up feeling, she exclaims:

"It is too much! It is too much! Consider what you do. You quit your home for me! You give up home, friends, power and service, all for me—for me, the cause of your most righteous anger—me, an out-cast from your heart!"

"It is the man's part. Where the pair are man and wife, it is the stronger who should yield."

"Tell me, what man has ever done such things?"

Diana moves in front of Leonard, fixing on his face a pair of eyes as frank and pure as in her maiden days, and with unflinching voice, says bravely:

"Leonard Lyle, if I can read the sense between these lines, your purpose is, to sail away, to leave me here in credit, and to draw suspicion on yourself, as the offender who has caused our parting, in the hope of leading men into the false belief that you have been guilty of some wrong towards me—some wrong which a pure and honest woman could not overlook?"

Leonard hangs down his head, abashed by her clear insight.

"You mean to draw suspicion from my guilty head to your all-innocent heart! Have you considered how that obloquy will sting and stain? And all for what? That I may live in peace? You, injured and unspotted, take on you a bond of shame! And all for me—abuser of your boundless trust—intruder on your unpolluted hearth!"

"Diana!" he exclaims, the pulses of his heart going wild and quick.

"Leonard!" she rushes onward, dropping in her passion the more formal family name, "you break my heart. If you were hard and mean, I might bear up against you. Leonard, be coarse—be cruel—and I will be proud. Your kindness kills me. You are not a man. You, fly from home and child; you, give up rank and power; you, court the mockery of men; you, brave the scorn of women—that a wife, unworthy of your love, may move among the great in station and the pure in life—crowned with the aureole of an injured saint! Leonard, you're not a man; you are a god!"

"My love!" he answers, rushing to his wife, catching up her form, and pressing her passionately to his heart.

CHAPTER X.

Renunciation.

"LIFT up thine eyes—nay, level into mine," says Leonard, a beseeching tenderness in his tone and look.

Diana lifts her eyes slowly from his bosom to his face.

"Oh, blessed light," he whispers; "light of my own love—dear now as ever in my sight." She drops her head again; and Leonard lays his lips once more on her wan cheek. "Look up," he says at length: "look round, Di; through this open window you can see the water; on that water floats our yacht. The fires are lit, the men are ready. Let us fly—fly from the world. Fly with me, love—. We, and our little one—alone!"

Diana, gazing through the oriel window on the yacht, repeats his words: "Fly—we—alone?"

"We, and our little one, alone."

"Fly whither, love?" she asks, as in a dream.

"The home of love—the home of youth and love. North, south; all tracks are one to me, so thou art by my side. Come, Di, the word, and we are gone. There are a hundred islets in those Southern seas, where under gentle suns and bending palms our lives may swim through one long summer's dream."

"Ah me, those bending palms!"

"We'll find an islet of our own; an islet never yet laid down in chart; and consecrate that shore to love."

"An islet consecrate to love!"

"Speak to me, Di! Let's put a waste of sea—wide, dim, and trackless sea—between our love and all these cankering things."

"Would such a paradise were ours!"

"A word, the steam is up, and we are gone."

With slow and serpentine grace, Diana slips away from his encircling arms, repeating to herself; "It is a dream—it is a dream. We play again at boy and girl."

Standing at arm's length from him, she replies in a clear note, "Leonard, if we should ever reach that shore, you'd be arrested on the spot."

"By what, Di?"

"By the world. We are no longer boy and girl, paddling on the James and ambling over Malvern Hill. Nay, we are not the groom and bride who loitered on the Nile, and dreamt beneath the Syrian stars. The world has overtaken us. New duties have arisen; our

child is growing up; the country calls to you. No man is master of himself; no soldier is at liberty to quit his post. You cannot slip away and hide your talent in the ground."

"Dear love, thou art my world."

"A part of it; not all. I should be crazy as a girl to think so. Man has many things beyond his love. Rank, family, ambition——"

"Stay! Rank, family, ambition—all these petty, interests fuse in love. I heed them not; I know them not. Listen and believe me, darling mine. All pride of rank and birth, all hope of fame and power; nay, more, all legends and beliefs of men, all likes and dislikes, passions and desires, that make the very air in which we live: I fling them off for thee!"

Diana falls into his outstretched arms with a wild gasp, "My love! my soul!"

How long they stand there, locked in each other's arms, they never know. It seems an instant, and it seems an age. At length the tide of feeling ceases to flow in, and at the slack, Diana, edging back on ordinary sight and sound, begins to murmur in her heart, "A while—a little while! It is so sweet, and I am faint with bliss!"

She tries her foot, to feel that she is standing on the floor, not floating on the air, upheld as in a dream. Her sinews answer to her will; and then she says to him, "Unclasp me, Leonard."

But he clings the closer to her form. The more she strives to free her waist and neck from his embrace, the more he folds her head, and presses her bosom to his heart.

"Unclasp me, Leonard," she entreats; "unclasp me, love: it is our last embrace."

"It is, Di; it shall never end."

"The sweetest and the last," she sighs, submitting to his strong caress. Again there is a term of silence; tender, soft, unspeakable silence. Only by degrees can she untwine those folding arms; at length she gets away, and facing him in her proud misery, repeats to him what she has long been murmuring to herself:

"We talk like boy and girl, who are astray in summer woods. You must not think of it again. You, waste your life in the luxurious void of Southern seas! You, vanish from a land in which you hold such stakes! Why should this sacrifice be made for me? No, Leonard Lyle, my pride takes up the challenge yours throws down. I am Frank Randolph's daughter! Who has taught my pride to soar? You, Leonard Lyle. You filled me with the stiffness of my race. To you I was the meekest of all meek and lowly things; but when you cast me out, I am again my father's child. We two are equal now. Who taught me that the blood of Randolph was the blood of kings?"

Leonard stands still and silent, with his eyes on her rapt face, as on that night when he listened to her voice at Doncaster House, while the fierce words came from her throat like a hot wind.

With quick, decided touch, she rings the bell, and Grough comes in.

"Leave us a little while," gasps Leonard, as the lawyer shows his face between the jambs.

"No, Leonard, let him enter," she entreats her husband; "nay, you must not balk me here. It is the last request that I shall ever make. This gentleman

has heard the story of my shame. He came to me an enemy; I read it in his eyes and in his tones. Now, since he knows the indictment, it is just to me that he should hear my answer. Let him stay."

He would they were alone; they only, man and wife; that he might wrestle with her pride. But, for the instant, he is powerless in her hands. What she demands is just; he cannot say it is unjust. Grough knows the charge; if she has any answer, Grough will have to learn it soon or late. Why not from her own lips? With boding heart, he nods assent, and Grough comes in and shuts the door.

"Here, sir, is the deed you brought to me," she goes on speaking in a slow, deliberate way to Grough: "by this instrument my husband gives me houses, lands, and funds, as princely as himself. Now note how I receive his gifts: I rend his covenant to shreds."

She tears the deed across, again across, and then into a hundred bits.

"Di!" exclaims Leonard, "you are doing you know not what."

"Look, sir," she pushes on, addressing Grough; "Sir Leonard lays his riches at my feet, and I decline his gifts. I am his wife—the partner of his rank; and in your presence I renounce that name and rank. I am Frank Randolph's child! If one must go, it is for me, not him, to quit these walls. Here stands his house, the cradle of his race. Out from these gates have passed a gallant line—Crusader, Yorkist, Cavalier—passed out to noble deeds and honourable graves; and yet, the bravest and the best of that long line are all summed up and crowned in him I love!"

"My life!" gasps Leonard, straining towards the lofty and retiring form.

"In such a soil," she ends, "I am a waif and stray, while he is rooted in the living rock. Adieu!"

"My love, my love!" cries Leonard, darting forward.

She pauses, looks at him, and waves him back.

"Pursue me not. One kingdom cannot hold us now. Adieu, adieu!"

He has no power to follow and compel her. She is like some priestess in a gothic camp; the daughter of a king, made holy to the gods. He dare not stop her; he can only cry to her in pain:

"Di! Di! don't leave me, Di!"

She pauses at the door, arrested by that cry. She gazes on him for a long time, fluttering at the heart, but in the end her nerves regain their strength, and the great storm within her passes by. Then, glancing round the room, to see if haply she can make some sign, she notices the rose, steps to the table on which it lies, and says:

"I'll take this flower—his gift—his first gift and his last!"

Turning to Grough, as she stands within the door, she adds:

"You are the witness, sir, that of his gifts I take no other than this flower. And for the rest, Diana Randolph renounces every earthly claim on Leonard Lyle!"

And so she vanishes from their sight.

BOOK X.

C O N F L I C T.

PERIOD, 1870.

CHAPTER I.

Grace.

WHEN Diana lays her hand on the latch of her door, she finds the sinews so relaxed that they refuse their office. With a sigh, she leans against the jamb and taps for Grace.

"Come in," replies her friend, supposing it is Bessie at the door. Diana tries to speak, but finds her mouth too dry. She beats against the panel with her fist, on which Grace opens the door, and screams. Diana seems as limp as water, and as pale as milk.

Steadying her friend by the arm, Grace draws her to the couch, and laying her softly down, rings for the maid, and sends her for the doctor—"Quick! he's in the gun-room; quick!"

Diana points to her parched lips, which Grace bathes and cools in water.

"Get her into bed," says Lamber, coming in to the sick room; "she must be put to bed."

Leaving the room, Lamper paces up and down the hall, while the two women undress and help his patient. While he is moving to and fro, wondering what has happened to excite her, Leonard comes in from the corridor, leading to the chapel. He is passing to his

cabinet when he sees his cousin. "Ha! that's you, Warren?"

"I've been sent for to her room again."

"And you have seen her?"

"For an instant. I have ordered her to bed. Grace is undressing her."

"She'll not get up again to-day?"

"Nor for the next three days."

"Do what you can for her, Warren. This trouble is a sad affair. When Grace is free, ask her to step into my cabinet for a moment—there's a good fellow. I want a word with her."

"She shall be there."

Wringing his cousin's hand, Sir Leonard passes into the empty room, and waits for Grace.

"All wrong there, too," thinks Lamber; "I must order him to cruise. Salt sea, and a stiff breeze, are the best medicines for a Lyle."

When Grace comes in, she looks at Leonard with a deep compassion in her eyes. It is a house of woe; this house that was so bright and happy but a week ago. Both man and wife are trodden down, and neither she nor Warren has divined the cause. They suffer; he not less than she. So far, Grace can act a woman's part. While either is in pain, it is her duty to be near.

"Grace, dear," says Leonard, "I have need of you just now."

"I've brought you a message from Warren," she replies; "he has told Diana you must go on board, and now he says the same to you. Excuse me putting it abruptly; he insists that you shall go on board at once."

"I'm ready for a cruise. The fires are lit, the steam is up. In three hours I can sail."

"How quick you are! He does not mean to-day?"

"To-morrow, then. You know that General Cridge is coming down?"

"We can receive him, Leonard, for the few hours he will stay. He comes to see your wife."

"I need to see the General, Grace. But you are right about the cruise. A spank will do me good. I've fed so long on brine, this smell of grass and earth upsets me. Tell Warren I will do as he requires, and if he thinks it should be so, I'll start to-morrow night."

This matter settled, and exactly in the way that suits his plan, Leonard reverts to his first design in asking Grace into his room. Diana's attitude fills him with alarm. From many trials, he has learnt to understand that her soul is always in her words. She never says the thing she does not mean. She'll try to get away; and if she tries, how is she to be stopt? Some steps have been already taken to prevent her going off. The great hall door is locked. Joe is at the gates, with orders to raise an alarm, should she attempt to pass. But these are coarse and clumsy barriers, which would surely fail to keep her in if she were strong enough to go. He wants her to remain at Castle Lyle; to bear his name; to keep his house; to have the care of Frank; but he can only keep her by her own consent, and this consent he hopes to win through Grace.

"Grace, dear, I want you to be very good: as good as only the best women are at their very best."

"What can I do?"

"You are offended with me, and I cannot help myself. In your relations to Diana and myself, you have

a right to know what is between us, parting us from each other; and I may not tell you—for some time to come. It is not an ordinary thing, believe me. If it were, you might know all.”

Grace stands before him in a waiting mood, her eyes fixed eagerly on his face, intent to hear his wish and do his will, if so she may remove the cloudlet that has come between these loving hearts. But Leonard's face is blank to her. He dare not tell her that his wife was born in shame—which is to him the head and front of her offence. He understands the lady's look; but presses back the fearful secret on his lips.

“Grace, this mystery must breed suspicion in your mind, perhaps anger in your heart. That, too, I have to bear. And now we want your aid. Mark, Grace, *we* want your aid; for it is her affair as much as mine.”

“Leonard, you may depend on me. Point out the way, and what you ask me shall be done.”

“I know that, Grace. You are her friend and mine. If you could lift this burthen from our heads, you'd do it. Listen. Warren has ordered me to cruise; to-morrow I shall have to sail. What shall we do with Frank? I cannot think of tearing him from her knee. But what am I to do? She talks of leaving Castle Lyle. It is an act of frenzy; we are all of us insane just now. She might attempt to leave. She would not steal the boy, but neither can she leave him in this place alone. Ask her to wait till I come back.”

“That is what you want of me?”

“It is, dear Grace. Get me her promise not to leave till I come back. You may, on my side, tell her that on my return, she shall be free. No further tram-

mels shall be put on her design. Ask her to forgive what I have said and done. Tell her I will never force myself on her again. She shall be free to go or stay. This place is hers, and no one will molest her while she chooses to remain. But get from her a pledge, that she will lodge beneath this roof, and do her best with Frank, till I come back."

Grace feels for him very deeply. Leonard is one of those men of high spirit and superb physique, with whom women hardly ever connect the idea of pain and suffering. He is never ill and never faint. His spirits seem to well from an unfailing source. In his society, weak men grow strong, and old men young. His animal vitality is so rich, that there is neither ebb nor flow, but only a perpetual calm. When such a man grows wan of cheek, and dim of eye, the women who love him feel a fearful and unreasoning alarm.

Diana, though in bed, is sitting up. The flurry has not brought on fever, as the doctor feared it might. In truth, she is more composed in face—and perhaps in mind—than she has ever been since that fatal first of May.

Grace tells her tale. Diana asks her for the rose—now resting in a vase—and sticks it in her dress; looking at it slowly, dubiously, as an Oriental female palter with an amulet. The object of her thought is not so much the rose as Grace. Can she unload her soul to Grace? She loves Grace; Grace loves her. Grace has become to her more than Prue, almost as much as Mary. Yet, because she loves her, and has need of her, Diana fears to open out her mind. Grace is a Southern woman, with an inborn prejudice of race, the force of which no human being can foretell. What

would she say to a confession that her friend's mother sleeps at Riverside in the slaves' cemetery, under a headstone bearing the name of Dinah Crump? Diana shrinks from such a trial. If she could tell the story of her mother's life to Grace, at her own time, in her own way, appealing to the woman's higher nature; first, convincing Grace that her mother was a free woman; next, that she was Senator Randolph's wife; then, that she was an innocent victim to Colonel Randolph's rancour or mistake; the story might be told with some fair prospect of success in softening the Georgian lady's inborn prejudice of race. But such a telling of her tale would need much care, and a selected time and place. At present she is unprepared. A time may come when she can speak. But now, she dares not tell her friend that her estrangement from Leonard springs (as she supposes) from his discovery of her taint of blood.

Nor dares she send her answer to her husband by the lips of Grace. Leonard might infer that Grace was in her secret, and might speak of things unfit for her to hear in that abrupt, suspicious way. If Leonard's love has failed her, on exposure of her taint of blood, how can she expect it to survive in Grace? Women are more conservative than men.

At length she answers:—

"Grace, you're a good advocate. You have won your cause. I will go to him myself, and tell him in a single word that I will wait till he comes back."

CHAPTER II.

In Rupert's Tower.

WHILE Leonard is waiting for this promise from his wife, he carries out his scheme for getting Tab and Slokk on board the *Foam*. Taking up the warrant of arrest, he first walks to the corridor, where Joe is on the watch, and asks, in passing, "How's the captive? Moping and muttering still?"

"Aye, that she be, Sir Leonard. As I said afore, she go on moping and miowing."

"What does she say?"

"S . . . s—spitfire like! Then, it is Di, and Di-Di, and Diana; mostly it's Di. Think she be off her head a bit. Perhaps it is the ghosts and graves. Some folks can't abide ghosts and graves."

"Keep to thy post till I come back," the baronet answers, going away, but thinking, as he strides towards the lady's bower, "Such ghosts are apt to rouse the demon of remorse. If she is lying—as, in spite of Di's confession, I trust she is—lying for a base and miserable end,—some hope of gain, some humour of revenge—these ghosts and graves may help to shake her nerves, and lay her open to direct appeal. I'll see her, by-and-by."

Going by the spiral stair down into the private garden, Leonard hails the bo'son.

"All right, Sir Leonard; lubber safe inside."

Pressing through the stones and bushes, left in artistic roughness and disorder, Leonard opens the strong wicket leading into the vault of Rupert's tower. Simon is asleep on a great mat, lent to him from the kitchen.

Leonard is far from savage, but his heart grows harder as he listens. What a beast that rascal is! With what a miserable whine and howl he took his souse in the horse-pond! Tab is vile enough, but Tab is worth a hundred Simon Slokks.

Crossing the vault and coming to the corner where the old slave-driver lies, Leonard turns him over with his boot, and bids him get up.

"Schnapps!" hiccups the waking man.

"Assist him, bo'son, to his legs."

"Vat dere!" yawns Simon.

"It is I, Sir Leonard Lyle. I fear your bed is hard—your lodging damp. If you would like a change, there's a snug berth in the yacht. You know my yacht?"

"Der *Voam*? I know him. In de road, down dere—Port Lyle."

"That's my yacht. You'll visit me on board?"

"Me no like yacht."

"We're going to sea."

"Me no like sea."

"Let me explain myself. We're running out to sea. You go with us."

"Vat for me go to sea?"

"To silence you and Tab."

"How moosh you pay to shilence me and Taab?"

"Consider well. If you're on board the yacht your skin is safe."

"How dat?"

"You may be sick or not. That is the business of a day. There's greater peril if you stay on shore."

"How dat? Gife me some schnapps."

Bo'son hands him a flask of potent liquor, which

he sucks till his breath fails him. Leonard goes on: "It is a choice of evils, Simon Slokk. You make your choice. Which will you have? A berth on board the *Foam* or a cell in York jail?"

"In jail?"

"York jail. You have lately been in York?"

"New York."

"York in Yorkshire?"

"Never shaw him all my porn tays."

"You know John Jones?"

"Jones? Man vat keep Cat and Fiddle?"

"The same."

"Neber shee dat Jone."

"You never lodged in that man's house; you never ran up scores; you never bolted, leaving all your debts unpaid?"

Simon begins to sulk and scowl. Sir Leonard seems to know too much. He's just like Lady Lyle. No, not so bad as Lady Lyle. He never saw him rifle the dead. Yet from his talk, Simon concludes that he must have seen that officer from Scotland Yard, whom Simon, from experience in the western prairies, calls the sheriff.

"Can you read plain print and writing, Simon Slokk?" asks Leonard, holding out a written paper and a printed placard. "Here is a warrant to arrest one Simon Slokk, otherwise Colonel Slokk, for swindling. I will read you this account. You're charged with going to an inn at York—where you have never been—kept by John Jones—whom you have never seen—and running up a bill, which you have never paid. The sum was twenty-seven pounds, six shillings and five pence, lawful money of this realm. According to

this document, you bolted from that city, leaving a heap of brick-bats in your box. That's swindling—swindling is a crime. There is a warrant out for your arrest. I hold that warrant in my hand."

"Dat, oder Simon Slokk. Dere ish more Simon Slokk ash one."

"Ha! Luckily, here is a description of him. Now, listen to this printed text:—

"ABSCONDED FROM YORK!

"TEN POUNDS REWARD!

"Simon Slokk, otherwise Colonel Slokk. Passes for a native of the United States. He is evidently a foreigner, probably a Fleming or a Frieslander. He is supposed to have been a slave-driver; he is now a common tramp and cheat, hanging about fairs and races, generally in company with a negro woman.

"PERSONAL MARKS.

"Age, about forty-seven; face flabby and blotched; beard and moustaches dirty white; legs rickety; utterance thick and halting; speaks bad English; nearly always drunk."

"Concise, not complimentary. You recognise the portrait, Colonel Slokk?"

"Vat nex?"

"You have no opening for escape save one—the yacht. A whistle, and the officer is here; a whistle and the irons are on your wrist. Before the sun goes down you're lodged in jail."

"Dat worse as Rupert tower."

"Now, answer me. I offer you a berth on board the *Foam*. Not as a friend; make no mistake. Nine years ago you drew a knife on me. I wrenched it from your hand——"

"Himmel!" groans Simon, shrinking back; "he know me all!"

"You charged me, in my absence, with the crime of having drawn that knife on you, and having shed your blood. Such deeds are easier to forgive than to forget. You are my foe, and I am yours. It is a fight between us—toe to toe and point to point. You understand me?"

"Vat for me go on board mit you?"

"Because we have a common interest in this game."

Slokk is alarmed lest Lady Lyle may have told Sir Leonard of his robbery of the dead. If so, the "fighting devil" means to get him on board, and rob him in his turn. He thinks of the stolen papers in his under belt, and wonders what Sir Leonard means by a common interest in the game.

"Vat game?" he ventures to inquire.

"A common interest in Tab's silence," answers Leonard. "Tab is a lying slut. It is for your good as well as mine that we should seal her mouth."

"Mine goot?"

"For yours, even more than mine. Her babble vexes me; but it may murder you."

The word "murder" prods the overseer's conscience. They are always talking about murder. Years ago she called him murderer and rifler of the dead! Simon has not got over it yet. She may have seen him slip those stones; she must have seen him steal those papers; they intend to put a noose about his neck! He must be cautious how he acts.

"Dat lady go on board?"

"No, Simon; she remains on land."

Simon considers well.

"How moosh you pay me?"

"Not one shilling."

"Hum! How long we shtay on board?"

"A week—a month—a year—I cannot tell. You go on board of your own will; you stay on board at mine."

"Vere shall ve land?"

"Just where I please—east, west, north, south; Nile, Niger, Hudson, Delaware. You go without conditions."

"Den me besser like dry land."

"It is my last word, Simon Slokk. *Foam* or jail?"

Leonard puts his yachting whistle to his lip.

"Me besser like de *Voam*," groans Simon, driven to his last hole.

"Agreed! Come to my cabinet and sign."

CHAPTER III.

Spitting Fire.

THEY march in single file, Simon in the middle, with the smart young bo'son in his wake. On reaching the great hall, Leonard whispers to Joe: "Be ready; when I ring the bell, come in with Tab." He tells the bo'son to get some help; the gig-crew may be best; and have a boat in readiness to put off. With hitch and scrape, the lad obeys.

Opening the door of his cabinet, Leonard pushes Simon in, and turns the key. They are alone; these foes of nine years' standing; and the old slave-driver feels as a fox might feel in the cage of a lion's whelp.

"Now, Simon Slokk, we are agreed," says Leonard, laying his finger on a bell. "You are my guest? You

go on board the *Foam* to-night! You go of your free will? You journey as I please, land when I please, cruise where I please?"

"Dat ish agree."

Leonard rings. Joe is already at the door with Tab, and enters as his master springs the bell.

"Simon, this woman says she is your wife?"

"Dat ish big lie."

"S . . . s!——." Tab spits her venom on the wretch who promised her so recently to acknowledge her as his wife.

"Shut up," growls Simon.

"Is it untrue?" Sir Leonard asks the man. "It is! Then she tells lies?"

"Ven she call herself my vife."

"S . . . Sir Leonard," interposes the quadroon, appealing to her enemy for justice against her husband.

"Shut up, shpitifire—you no shpeak."

Leonard, looking from one to the other, says, slowly and with magisterial emphasis:

"And there is one great lie that she has told—a lie against . . . the lady . . . of this house?"

"That lie was true; you know that lie was true," quibbles the coloured woman, glaring from the baronet to the overseer, and from the overseer to Joe. "In spite of his brave language, he believes that lie—believes she was a base-born slave," she nags, in answer to herself.

"In your own interest, Simon Slokk," the baronet goes on, "she must not speak that lie again."

"How moosh you pay me, she no shpeak?"

"I make no bargains. If I'm satisfied with her, you shall not go without reward."

"I'll speak it fifty times—five hundred times!"

"Hold on there: all serene!" cries Joe, clutching her by the wrist, lest she should slither off again.

Tab stamps and threatens.

"How I shtop her moud?"

"Tell her—as a jest," says Leonard, "that if she lisps that lie again, or even lifts that hand in scorn again, you'll kill her. That may do."

"Den she blab more and more."

"Then, I tell you—in earnest—that if ever she should lisp that lie or look that scorn again, I . . . shall . . . kill . . . you."

"He means it," chuckles Tab, below her breath.

"Me!" shivers Simon.

"On the spot. Let her but breathe a word—you're a dead dog."

"He'll do it! What a man!" pants the dusky female, holding in her breath, but shaking Joe off in scorn, and following the baronet's movements with admiring eyes.

"Dat worse as Viper Flat," groans Simon. "Kill me on de shpot!"

A noise of feet is heard outside the door. Sir Leonard opens it, and hails his crew. The skipper is at hand, for though he sees things very darkly, like the rest, he fancied he might be of use, and so he came on shore.

"Cox," says Sir Leonard, "these parties are to go on board. Put them in decent berths. Look to their clothes and let them have hot baths. They've lived as man and wife; but there is some dispute about it; you're the father of a family; and you'll do what's right. If they are willing to be married, we can help

them; if they're not married, we'll have no nonsense on the *Foam*."

"Speak out, my hearty," Cox inquires of Simon; "shall we have a parson or a register, and make you a decent couple?"

"Me no more vife. Me plenty vife."

"He lies!" snarls Tab, with a long, pulsing hiss like that of a rattlesnake.

"Come, all serene, old 'oman!" interposes Joe.

"I am his wife; he knows I am his wife," she answers fiercely.

"You have your orders, Cox. See that they go on board. Keep them apart. Look to your fires. At any moment I may come on board; and when I come on board, you must be ready to steam out."

Joe leads the way. Simon goes out; but Tab stands still. Leonard remarks to Cox that while they behave well, they must be treated well. Tab stands in the centre of the cabinet, watching Sir Leonard's motions with a fascinated eye. Observing her, he points to the door, and the retreating crew: "Follow your mate."

She fronts him, but in a semi-crouching attitude, like a cheetah at the spring.

"Follow your mate!" he repeats.

"Sir Leonard Lyle!"

"The truce is made. I have no more to say."

"I have. What do you want from me?"

"Silence; no more. Be gone—be silent—and you need not fear."

"I will not go on board."

"The man you claim as husband is already gone."

"Let Simon go on board or not as he thinks fit. I shall not go on board."

"Not go?"

"I'll neither go on board, nor hold my tongue. What I have said, I'll say again."

"If thou art woman born——"

"Sir Leonard Lyle, I'm scum. I'm scum; black scum; nothing but scum; black, bastard scum—like Lady Lyle!"

"Hold hard!" he grinds his teeth, and clutches at the marble stand, "I cannot fell thee to the earth."

"Why not? You're big enough!"

"Thou art a woman, and I cannot strike thee dead!"

"What a strange man!"

"In the great name of heaven, why dost thou rail against my wife? What has she done to thee and thine?"

"I hate her—she is fair. I hate her—she is rich."

"She cannot help being fair and rich."

"I hate her for her own sake. I hate her for her mother's sake. They might have set us free. They didn't set us free. They flogged us; flogged my mother; flogged myself. I hate them all. I hate her most of all. I hate her most, because she is the last. I hate her, but I'll never sell her secrets for my gain. I'll neither eat your bread, nor sleep in your house. Big as you are, you cannot bully me; rich as you are, you cannot buy me. Simon would sell her—hair by hair, and tooth by tooth—for pence. I'll make no market of her shame. My cry is hate. I crush her, but I crush her only for revenge."

CHAPTER IV.

Recoil.

AFTER staring at this female fury for a long time, Leonard reverts in his own mind to a thing which has come to him more than once since this affair began. This creature, scum and slut as she is called, is not yet wholly lost. She is an untamed animal, with the vices of an untamed animal. But she has virtues also; virtues which are instinct rather than accomplishment. Can this wild nature be reclaimed? If so, is he the man to take the case in hand? He has not sought the task, he reasons with himself, nor is he bound to try what can be done. Not being her master—stay! That line may run too far. In one sense, he is bound to her: she is a cousin of his wife. No scorn of his can rend that tie of blood. Let her be what else she may, this woman is Diana's kith and kin. It may not count for much, but it is something, even for his enemy, to be Diana's kith and kin. If there is good in her—however latent and unconscious—it is right for him to try and bring it forth.

She is of higher metal, he perceives, than Simon Slokk. That wretch would sell his soul for gain. He is as brutal, too, as he is mean. With what a cruel glee he flicked that whip; with what a fiendish glare he drew that knife! And then, what malice in that charge against an absent man; what brazen impudence in that tale of blood! Leonard can pity Tab, a savage animal, hungering for revenge, while he has nothing in his heart but loathing for the partner in her crimes.

While his gaze is still being bent on Tab no less

in pity than in anger, he is conscious of a tap at the door. "Come in!" he answers, sharply, thinking it is Joe come back for Tab. The door is slowly opened, and a figure in a white robe stands under the lintel, her tawny curls flung down, her face pale and proud: the figure framed between the jambs in such a way that she appears to stand under the protecting battle-axe of the Silver Knight. As Leonard turns his face, that picture fills his eye, that fancy stirs his breast. "My wife!" he mutters to himself, inaudibly; "my household gods appear to take her part!"

Tab turns on her heel to look at the intruder—which she takes to be the ghost of Lady Lyle.

"Bad girl—bad woman—down!" says the figure, light flashing from her great blue eyes.

Tab cowers, and tries to hiss, but she is too much frightened by the ghost.

"Down, I say; down into the dust!" continues Lady Lyle.

"What an imperial frown!" says Leonard to himself, amazed at her ascendancy over that untamable and boastful creature.

Tab, more frightened every moment, huddles on the ground and hides her face.

Diana turns from her cowering figure in superb disdain, confronting her husband with a calm though suffering face.

"Leonard, I have brought my answer to your last request. So long as we are man and wife by law, you have a right to my obedience: when the law has freed us from each other, we shall go our several ways. Till then, your wishes are my law. I will remain till you come back. Adieu! Spare me the pain of words. Adieu!"

And she is gone; melting back into the darkness of the hall. The Silver Knight uprears his battle-axe, as though that hero were protecting her retreat. "Yea, my very household gods take part with her!" he sighs again, sinking back into his chair.

Lifting her eyes to him, Tab reads in his blank face that all is over with this man and wife. Her tale has told; her shot has sped. "He is a handsome man," she murmurs; "it is a pity he should suffer so much pain."

She drops her head and moans. Leonard has forgotten she is here; but now he rises from his chair, and saying to himself, "No creature can be lost in whom there lingers any sense of shame," he takes her by the hand, and lifts her from the ground. "Rise, woman; there is good in thee, if only one could find the way to bring it out."

Tab feels his hand, and listens to his speech, muttering to herself, "A man! He is a man!" A light plays on her dusky cheek and brow, as, gliding in front of him, she puts her arms across her bosom, bends her eyes to the ground, and says in a meek, and even grateful voice, "Sir Leonard, I will go on board."

"Of your free choice?"

"I'll go on board of my free choice."

"Without a promise?"

"I can wash and work; I'll earn my bread; and I will trust in you."

This change in Tab, brought on, as he can see, by moral means, apart from either greed of money or fear of blows, inclines Sir Leonard to regard her more and more as an unconscious tool of Simon: conscious,

perhaps, in the lower and mechanical use of words, and yet unconscious in the higher and more spiritual sense of things. Men may have eyes, and yet not see; men may have ears, and yet not hear. The moral sense may be asleep. Such seems to be the case with this dark woman; an impure and miserable creature at the best; yet giving off these sparks of noble fire.

Leonard softens to her more and more. Simon is a brute, and she has long been living under his control. How could she learn the better way? He'll try what being kind to her will do. She must be injured, and is probably misled. A little kindness may surprise her into—into what? He hardly knows. It is for him to do the right thing; and if good should come from it to him, that will be also right. He asks her whether she goes on board of her own free will. She answers, "Yes." He warns her that the cruise may be prolonged. She does not mind a jot.

Then comes the question of her part in Simon Slokk. Does she desire to go on board as Simon's wife? She does. She *is* his wife; and will maintain her right. But Slokk denies her story. Yes; but she believes Sir Leonard might compel him to admit the fact. Sir Leonard, she has heard from Joe, is a justice of the peace, and a justice of the peace, she knows, can order folks to do things. He can cause 'em to be flogged. Simon must not be beaten: he's a white man, and it hurts a white man more than a coloured man. But he might be threatened with the cat. He is afraid of it—very much afraid. One day at sea, she says, they saw a sailor being whipt. Blood spurted from the sore: the sailor fainted. Simon was sick, and had

to lie in bed two days. He would now do anything, she is certain, to escape the cat. Leonard, inclining to think her story may be true, inquires into the details, and she gives him the whole drama, ending with the orgy, the card-party, and that fight in which the groom's best man got killed.

"I'll see what can be done," he adds, when she has finished. "To-morrow, we shall sail, and when we get to sea, there will be time to see what can be done."

Joe answers to a finger on the bell. It is now too late to send the woman on board, and Leonard orders Joe to see that she has a good supply of mats and blankets in the chapel.

"Curse the man, handsome as he is!" growls Tab below her breath, as she goes out. "He's sending me to those ghosts again! Yet he's a fair man, too. He might have had me flogged. It is a pity he should suffer so much pain."

CHAPTER V.

Night Watch.

LEONARD is left alone. As Tab goes out the belfry clock strikes one; deep silence follows, hushing in the night. For days past, he has never been in bed, nor can he think of sleep. It is the last night he may pass beneath the roof under which he was born, under which more than twenty of his ancestors have dwelt. He cannot rest; he passes out into the hall.

A single lamp is burning in that hall, from which a pale and spectral light is thrown on lance and shield, on drooping banners and on men in mail. He stops

in front of the Silver Knight, whose battle-axe still gleams before his eyes, as though it were protecting the retreat of Lady Lyle. He stands, and ask the question: Is he going to strike? No, that is fancy; but Leonard stops to look and think, pulling up his frame and standing fixed, like a soldier called to attention. No, it was a trick of the imagination—nothing more; yet he can hardly shake that fancy off. He likes to think of it; his wife is under the protection of that stainless knight, the hero of his house!

A clock strikes two.

He paces in the gloom, pausing at every turn, and listening with a fretful ear to every sound. Was that the rustle of a step? No, it was nothing but the wind among the oak-leaves. Leonard peers along the walls, from which so many of his ancestors look out; here, gallant gentleman in hat and plume; there, stately dame in velvet seamed with pearls. A long, exacting, goodly line it is; each knight and lady of the purest blood; without one flaw of birth in the great roll since Sire de l'Isle came over from his Norman chateau, fixed his eyrie on this Yorkshire nab, and won the daughter of a Saxon theign. As Leonard passes down the hall, he tells each story, one by one. The births, descents, and quarterings are at his finger's end. His shield is crossed and crammed with arms, and all these quarterings are of noble arms. No pedigree in England, even that of the reigning family, is freer from any trace of bend sinister and baton sinister, than that of Lyle. How proudly they have borne their heads, these pure, immaculate Lyles! He is their child, as proud of his unstained descent as any, but he is the last of that unbroken line. In Frank, his

son, the line will break. The family pride is humbled, even unto dust. His own descent is pure, but Frank must put away that boast of pure descent. Son of a bastard—of a slave!

A clock strikes three.

These words keep bubbling in his brain, and throbbing in his heart. Son of a bastard—of a slave! It is too much, it is too much! With fixed and livid stare he looks at the upraised battle-axe of the Silver Knight. Why is it so, Sir Leonard? Yet the fancy clings to him. That hero seems to stand on guard, his weapon raised in her defence.

Was that a murmur in her room? He strains to catch a sound. The last two nights she has been restless in her sleep, and rising in the early dawn, has left her bed and walked about her room. Is that her footstep? No, it is the tide. The moon is full, the tide runs high; that murmur is the roll of shingle. Not a breath is stirring in the hall. And—yet! That moan is hers—can be no other than hers!

He listens at her door; sinking on his knee as in the presence of a saint. It is her voice within, that voice which he may never hear again! "O erring Di—so great and dear to me in these dark days!" he gasps between his lips. Last night he heard her voice in prayer. The words were few and rapid, but he caught his own name and her mother's name. He shrank from listening, but he could not help but catch those names. What love she poured on each, what blessings she invoked on each! Some link unknown to him appeared to hold them close together in her mind. What is she saying now? He does not wish to catch her words, but only to observe her

frame of mind. Is she at rest—a little nearer rest, or is she rocking in that storm of misery? She speaks! It is not prayer this time. No, she is talking to herself. Herself? Hush, no; she is talking with the dead. He rises to his feet, and steps back from her door, dreading to catch some words not meant for him; but as he steps away, he hears the phrase, "Oh, mother mine, what have I done?—what have I done?"

Hushing the sentence from his ears, as something he should not have heard, he paces up and down the hall.

A clock strikes four.

A pale white tinge of light is creeping round the cornices and pricking out the Silver Knight. Leonard lifts a bar, drives back a lock, and pushes in a door. The dawn is breaking on a dull, grey sea, as Leonard steps into the fresher air. He wants to think, but in the open, under the great vault of heaven. Rooms stifle him, and interrupt his sight. Out on the terrace he can breathe and see his way.

By noon he means to sail. Some trifling things have yet to be arranged. Cridge must be seen, and Grough. He will not try to speak with her again. The last word has been said. . . . Is it the last?

In spite of evidence, he clings to one wild hope—that all their misery is but a dream!

Simon and Tab are scamps; they stick at nothing to attain their ends. He knows them well; knew them of old; for they have tried their arts on him. Long since they made a charge, which they were ready to support by oath, that he, Leonard Lyle, had drawn a murderer's knife on Simon, and had actually

shed his blood. That charge was false; and every oath in its support would have been perjury. What cared these rascals? They were ready to forswear themselves for gain. Such lives are mostly of one woof and warp. Why may not this new charge be false? It was a case of lucre then; it is a case of lucre now. Who was to be the victim then? He, Leonard Lyle. Who was to pay the price of silence? She, Diana Randolph. Why may not their game be now reversed? She is the victim of their charges, he is expected to pay the price. It may appear to rogues like these, waifs of the race-course and the country-fair, a safer thing to accuse a woman of bastardy than a man of murder. What, if all their words and oaths are false?

If the thing lay with them, he should reject their evidence: but she has owned her guilt, expressly, and before a crowd of witnesses. He cannot doubt that she believes in what she has confessed. But she may be mistaken in the facts. This is the one wild hope to which he clings.

At Riverside she passed, as he is well aware, through a great fever, during which she was delirious many days. Such maladies shake the mind almost as much as they shake the body; it is doubtful whether an attack of raving ever leaves the memory of past ideas and events intact. She told him at Simla, after her slight attack of moodiness, that one imagines much and forgets much when one is raving mad. May not this notion of being a woman born in shame, to which (as he supposes) she has now confessed, be a mere delusion dating from that feverish time? If so, the mystery might be explained.

If there were any one at hand who knew her at that date! He thinks of General Cridge. The illustrious soldier knew her at Riverside; for it was he who carried her to Niagara Falls. His Excellency is coming by an early train. His Excellency may assist him to some better lights.

CHAPTER VI.

Dawn.

WHEN Sir Leonard returns from the terrace, it is already broad day. Lamber is waiting for him in his cabinet with the cross look of a physician who sees that his orders are being disobeyed.

"Tut, tut, my dear Leonard," he begins; "this sort of thing will never do. We're like a ghost. We have been strolling up and down all night again! This is the fourth night out of bed. Our constitution will break down if we go on abusing it so much. Of course we're strong. We have the constitution of a horse. Gad, I should like to see the horse that would go on for forty hours without ever once dropping his ears and shutting his eyes. No horse in the Holder-ness hunt could do it, Leonard."

"Well? What then?"

"What then, Leonard? Can you ask me, in the double character of your doctor and cousin, what then? Why, if we knock up, the county will lay the blame on me. We're now a public man. We have no right to tumble over and lie down for weeks, with three or four women fussing about one's bed-side, insisting with their ready feet and anxious faces that there must be something else one needs to make one

cosy. These are the luxuries of private life. A public man must stand up, always steady—always at the fore, my boy. We can't have everything at once. If we are member for the shire——”

“Well thought of, Warren; I must speak to Grough about that membership for the shire. If you fall in with Grough, tell him I am waiting for him in my cabinet.”

“Don't you attempt to put me off like that, Leonard. I assure you these irregularities in food and sleep are dangerous things. You hardly tasted food, you drank no wine, at dinner yesterday. Come, Leonard, we must have a tonic.”

“Ha, well thought of. You remember, Warren, when I went abroad the first time—now so long ago—you made for me a box of medicine, hardly bigger than my cigar-case, with assorted remedies for sun-stroke, fever, ague, and a dozen other things which a man may suffer from at sea, in a longish sort of voyage?”

“Those drugs were for the tropics, Leonard! We're not sailing for the tropics now?”

“Ask me no questions, Warren; do as I beg you, like my cousin and my friend. You hardly dream, dear boy, how I am hipped just now, but you are right about the cruise. I ought to get away to sea. Your remedy will do me good; but I've a little of the old sea-rover in me, and I never know how far a-field my pennon may not roam. Prepare me such another box of drugs, and I will try to bring it back to you untouched.”

“Well, Leonard, as you like; but don't be off again for years. The county wants you. Lady Lyle will want you.”

"Tell me, Warren, now about your patient. You have been with her already?"

"Yes. Are we prepared for a surprise?"

"Come, come, the point. If there be any point."

"We are discharged. Our patient is herself again."

"Discharged?"

"Some change has taken place since yesterday. A weight seems lifted from her breast. It was a trouble in her mind, and that has vanished."

"There's no fear of a relapse?"

"No fear. She's up and dressed, sitting at her desk and giving her orders as in ordinary times."

"All that you count as favourable sign?"

"Most favourable, Leonard. My office, when the physician knows his duty, is a sort of priesthood. He's a poor physician who only counts the pulse and cheeks, and scan the colour and the tongue. Disease is often in the mind. We have to find the seat of our disease; to find it, silently, without a word being said on that which is the central point."

"And sometimes you detect a malady in the conscience where you were called to treat a congestion in the chest?"

"Right, my dear fellow; you are right."

"And then your treatment changes?"

"Yes; instead of pill and plaster, one prescribes a word of hope, a smile of forgiveness, as the case requires. The best medicine in the world is kindness."

"Well, in our case, Warren, tell me what you found."

"Her malady was in the mind. Yesterday she was not herself—not Lady Lyle, not mistress of this house.

She would do nothing that implied her right to rule. She gave no orders, but behaved as though she were a guest. That fancy has departed from her. She is now herself—the mistress of this house.”

“I cannot tell you, Warren, how your words relieve my heart.”

“It is a happy change. She wears a calm, resigned, and cheery look, as though she were expecting something to happen, or some one to arrive.”

“Some one is expected to arrive.”

“His black Republican Excellency, General Cridge?”

“Hush! Warren. He is her adopted father, and as good a man as he is great.”

“Of course, a rich father who has the good sense to adopt one is always good and great.”

“Warren, you are too much a partisan to see the finer side of General Cridge.”

“Gad, Leonard, I’m afraid of the fellow. If he stays here long, I expect to find him blowing up Rupert’s tower, and fighting a duel with the Silver Knight.”

“He’ll not be able to remain at Castle Lyle, but he will stay in England for a time, and my warm desire is that he may see her often while I am at sea.”

“Has *he* been told the secrets you conceal from Grace?”

“No, Warren; not a word. And now, good-bye.”

But Leonard’s heart is far less certain than his tongue. He answers glibly to his cousin; but when left alone, he is not free from that cousin’s curiosity in regard to General Cridge. He wonders whether General Cridge has any knowledge of his wife’s story. It is likely, and unlikely. As a friend of the family, he is

likely to have known the truth; yet, if he knew the truth, it is difficult to think that he—a man of ancient family and great possessions—could have made up his mind to receive her into his house, much less adopt her as his child. But here a sudden light breaks on him; a blinding flash of light. Has he not read in one of the many lives of General Cridge a story of his having run a branch of the great underground railway from the Slave States into the Free States? Leonard draws his breath in pain. May it not be the fact that General Cridge——

Springing to his feet, he hurries to the chapel, and bidding Joe remain outside, goes in to question Tab.

“How many people are acquainted with the matters to which you have sworn?”

“Five,” she answers.

“Who are they?”

“Simon and me—that’s two. You and herself—that’s four. My mother’s dead, so she won’t come.”

“The fifth is—Joe?”

“Shish! Joe’s not dead, yet he don’t count. Nor any of the crew. They heard everything; they understand nothing.”

“Who, then, is the fifth?”

“The Cherokee!”

“What is the Cherokee?”

“A villain, an impostor, who goes about in false names, false clothes, and false characters. When he came among the negro yards, he was a Cherokee doctor; now he struts about the world in gold and feathers as an American captain.”

“And they call him?”

"General Cridge."

"A Cherokee doctor, you were saying? And he knows the story as you tell it?"

"Knows it all; and knew it from the first. He saw her in the negro shed; he acted as her doctor, and he nursed her through the fever. When she got about, he carried her to Niagara Falls."

As Tab is speaking, Joe puts in his head:

"Sir Leonard, General Cridge is coom."

CHAPTER VII.

Day-Light.

LEONARD comes out into the hall to welcome his distinguished guest; but General Cridge has already gone into the boudoir, to pay his first respects to Lady Lyle.

While waiting Cridge's return from that interview, Leonard has time to ask himself what he shall say to him when they meet.

Long before he learned how closely Cridge had been connected with Diana's earlier days, the American soldier was an object of his study. General Cridge was an original man, both in the tent and in the field. When acting for himself, his plans had been always marked by new and daring thought, his execution of those plans by overwhelming dash and fire. When acting under orders, he had been notable for his prompt obedience and unflagging zeal. He had never murmured, never criticised. What he was told to do, he regarded as a thing that must be done. In battle he was fierce, unbending, pitiless; the very image, as he seemed to Leonard, of one of Cromwell's saints.

But he has grown in interest since those days. Diana's reference to his quarrel with her Uncle George, and her conviction, that those two men had measured swords, impressed him deeply. Afterwards he learned that Cridge conveyed her to Niagara Falls, where he received her into his house, placed her in a local school, and adopted her as his child. All these discoveries increased his interest in the man. That Diana loved him with a great and fixed affection, he was proud to see and hear. But now his personal concern in his distinguished visitor has suddenly become enlarged. This visitor knows Diana's history. He could unveil the mysteries of Riverside. That he will do so is unlikely; that he could do, if he cared, is pretty clear. He saw Diana in the negro shed, and he must know why she was in that shed. He nursed her through her illness, and he must have seen what brought that illness on. He carried her to his house, and must have known the secrets of her birth. Was it because she was a waif and stray—one born in servitude and shame—cast out into the world—a mark on her poor brow—that the illustrious Captain took such pity on the child?

Diana's door opens; General Cridge comes out. Sir Leonard steps up to greet his visitor, and after their first salutes, the General fixes on Leonard an anxious and inquiring look.

"You've seen her, General?"

"Yes," replies his guest, with martial brevity.

"You see the situation?"

"She has told me all."

"Of her confession?"

"She has told me, Colonel Lyle, that some charges

have been made against her, that you entertained those charges, and that she confessed her guilt."

"It is not all a dream?"

"I fail you, Colonel Lyle; a dream?" asks Cridge, reverting in his mind to his own theory of her delusion as to what her mother told her in the negro shed.

"What do you fancy in this business is a dream?"

Sir Leonard hesitates. It is very hard to put this shame and misery into words. But he is bound to ask his question, if he wishes General Cridge to speak. With half-averted face he answers:—

"I may be nursing nothing more solid than a conceit. But, General, it is hard to give up hope."

"Explain your thought."

"I mean all that about her birth."

"That fantasy about her mother's free condition, and her marriage with the Senator?"

"A fantasy! Yes, that was in my mind."

"Dismiss it, Colonel Lyle; it is a spurious and unwholesome guest. A soldier ought to deal with facts, sweeping all fantasies that cloud his view aside."

Sir Leonard hesitates again. Pacing the hall in silence, by the side of Cridge, he turns things over in his mind, and puts them under various lights. This General knows the truth. There's not much doubt as to the view he takes. There should be none. He must be asked point blank. It is a matter of such moment, that conventional notions may be put aside, and the distinguished soldier asked to say what he conceives to be the fact.

Stopping in his walk, Sir Leonard wheels on Cridge, and looking straight into his face, says with a pale and quivering lip:—

"General, you are said to be familiar with the history of Lady Lyle. You knew her at Riverside. You saw her at the time of her great sorrow, when her parents died. You nursed her through a long sickness; you carried her to Niagara Falls; and in the end adopted her as your child. You must have learned the truth. Tell me, as soldier speaks to soldier—in a word, was she, according to your best conviction, born in servitude and shame?"

"In servitude? Yes. In shame? No. Unless you mean in what the world considers shame?"

"General, I mean in what the world considers shame?"

"She was. According, to my best belief, she was."

"There is no more to say. The hope which clung to me is gone."

Stiff and unbending stands the Black Republican. Leonard is gazing up and down the walls. In front of him hangs a portrait of his mother, daughter of a Duke. Cridge watches him, more in anger than in pity.

"Colonel Lyle," he then breaks in, "you are a soldier, and I know a brave one. Now, sit down, and you shall hear the truth, as soldier speaks to soldier, and as man to man."

"I listen, General," answers Leonard, promptly, pulling up to his superior officer.

"It was your fortune, Colonel Lyle, to take the eye of a young girl; a lovely, brilliant, and original girl. You were her father's guest. You ate his salt; you paid attention to his child. She gave you all she had on earth. That treasure was the richest gift of Heaven. It was herself. And in herself the gift was perfect.

Look at her all round—and under every light. Is she not fairest of the fair? Is she not brightest of the bright? Is she not purest of the pure? In face, in genius, and in conduct, where in her can the severest critic find a flaw? For what is in herself, depending on herself, I challenge you to put your hand on any unsound spot. And then, her heart! I am an old man, Colonel Lyle; a stranger in the waste; but I have felt my life grow fresher in the sunlight of her smile. What must she be to you? A young man, Colonel Lyle, you won her as a girl, in all her vestal innocence of love. What you have found in her, you know."

"Yes, General, I am listening with my soul."

"Of all that went before her, let their fault be great or little, she is free; free in the sight of angels, if not in that of men."

"In this world, men, not angels, judge us," adds Sir Leonard very sadly, "and we have to live among our peers."

Cridge looks at him in doubt; for his appeal is evidently failing, and he tries a flank attack:—

"A soldier puts aside all fictions, but he never shuts his eyes on facts. Now, let us scan the situation, Colonel Lyle. This lady is your wife, the mother of your son. Do what you may, her blood is in the future baronet's veins, and in the veins of every future Lyle. And that blood is her mother's blood, as well as her father's blood. To me all blood is equal, for a man is either milk or bronze according to the zone in which he dwells. I, living on the Niagara, am white; my brother, living on the Nile, is tawny; and my second brother, living on the Niger, black. Nay, by removing from Niagara to Nile, I shall myself grow

tawny like an Arab. We are each a bit of clay, picked from the common earth, and kindled with the breath of life. It is the life of which we may be proud, the only thing of which we can be justly proud. Life is the gift of heaven, and blood, the vehicle of life, is sacred in the eyes of heaven."

"It is not that!" exclaims his host, to whose high nature such philosophy finds an easy entrance.

"So I expected, Colonel Lyle."

"No, General, it is not on that side. I could take the daughter of an Arab sheikh to wife without a blush. It is the birth—and not the blood."

CHAPTER VIII.

Straight?

IN the same stiff, mechanical voice, his Ironside Excellency takes up the tale:

"The birth, and not the blood! Where can we draw the line? To me, a looker-on, all birth appears to be legitimate, as all blood appears to be divine. I'm not a worldly man, you see; for I accept a law above your statue-books. You look to men as judges. I deny their jurisdiction, and appeal to heaven. But let me put the case on your own ground. You are a magistrate, and understand the course of justice. Would you call on me to answer for a crime in which I have no share? Would you arraign me at assizes for my father's fault? Would you condemn me for a sin committed ere I saw the light?"

"This statement leads to nothing!" says Sir Leonard, still more sadly.

"Colonel Lyle, this statement is her case. But

when I say her case, I add—it is a case that she will never plead. You're haughty, Colonel Lyle; and yet, your pride is Snowdon to White Top, compared with Lady Lyle's."

"She is her father's child, poor Di!"

"She is her mother's daughter, Colonel Lyle. And she has blood on that side, too. Base-born as you may call that mother, she was ninth in clear descent from Henri Quatre."

"Let that go by. We shall not come to terms."

"Observe me, Colonel Lyle. I am not here to bandy terms. You offered friendly separation; she renounced the great position of your wife. But you are ailing, and are ordered out to sea. That grieves her; both for your sake and her own. She is alarmed, that you are ill; she is annoyed, because she wished to go. You ask her to remain, and she remains. It seems a part of her religion to obey your will. When may we hope to see you back?"

"A month—a year—ten years?"

"Again I fail. A year—ten years?"

"General, you have not divined my purpose?"

"No."

"Then, I may fairly think it safe. But I confide in you. Next to myself, you are her friend, and when the hour of explanation comes, you, in my absence, are the man to tell her why I leave my home and country. I am going on a cruise for her."

"Again I fail."

"Here, General, is a secret touching her credit and repose, now known to five persons; she, you, myself, and the two tramps. I'm going to take those tramps to sea."

"To silence them?"

"To that end, and no other; but the cruise is ordered for my health; you see the bearing, as a blind, of that advice?"

"How long will you remain at sea?"

"So long as they have tongues to wag, and there is danger to her peace."

"Excuse me, Colonel Lyle; this is a most romantic and imprudent thing to do. Ten years may find you where you stand to-day!"

"It is the man's part, General Cridge. You see that knight in silver mail? One day, as he lay basking on this slope, a spirit, with the name of Duty, came to him and cried, 'Up, knight, draw sword and save the tomb of Christ!' But while she spake, a second spirit, with the name of Prudence, came and whispered in his ear, 'Duty, who's she that thou shouldst die for her? Thy bed is soft, thy larder full; the Syrian roads are white with pilgrims' bones!' What said the knight in mail? Nothing; he drew and marched. I boast that pilgrim's blood and bear his name."

Here's a rare soldier lost, thinks General Cridge, as he revolves a fresh idea that has suddenly darted on his mind. This cruise suggests to him a plan more likely to produce results than a mere aimless wandering up and down. If Tab and Simon were in New York he has no fear of being able to close their mouths; the courts of law would send them to the Tombs. But they are still in Yorkshire, waiting for stronger evidence of their guilt. An English magistrate requires much proof, and any premature attempt to bring them up would only put them on their guard. He can do nothing till his game is sure. In London

he has read the evidence and seen the counsel; as yet his hand is stayed for further proof; but if the *Foam* should sail into American waters she would come under a different rule, and then the parties might be taken out of her. Ten words along the wires, and officers might be ready in New York to board the *Foam* the moment she arrived. Once Tab and Simon were in jail, Diana's peace would be secured.

If Leonard could be got to aid in carrying out this scheme, the thing might soon be done; but General Cridge distrusts the baronet's willingness to give his help. These people of the world are worldly-minded: they can never do the straight thing in the straight way. They are hampered by conventions of their own. Leonard might think the project of carrying these two vagrants to New York in order that they might be seized by the police *unfair*. That is the worldly way; as if the one divine, unswerving rule were not that all offenders shall be brought to their account. The baronet's weakness must be humoured, so that by his means, though not by his consent, the right thing may be done.

"Well, Colonel Lyle," his Excellency resumes, "if you are bent on cruising up and down the world in order to kill time, I offer you a hint, which you can either take up or lay down, when you are out at sea. You have already asked my views about a certain point; I answered with a soldier's frankness. What I think of it you know; but we are sometimes in the wrong where we imagine we are sure. I may be wrong."

"Then you're not very sure?"

"I am convinced, and yet I may be wrong. There

is another view, the view, as I am bound to state, of Lady Lyle herself."

"Indeed?"

"She's got a notion in her head about some family papers being lost, some papers that would prove her mother's marriage and her own legitimate birth."

"Go on," gasps Leonard.

"You have but to find those papers and her case is cleared."

"Where are they?"

"In her fancy, as I take it, Colonel Lyle; you know my theory of her case."

"How could those fancies come into her head?"

"In fever, Colonel Lyle."

"But, General, there is hope she may be right?"

"Not much; yet who can say? Six several times I have led forlorn hopes and won, where every other person was convinced there was *no* hope."

"General, you are giving me fresh courage. Tell me how I may follow up this trail. I'll do it, quickly, silently, with all my heart and soul. You spoke of giving me a hint; I'm sure you mean a soldier's hint—at once a purpose and a plan."

His Excellency lays before Leonard an outline of Diana's story of these family documents. "It is a curious thing, you see, this fancy; clear, consecutive, alive with names and dates. If it be true, it oversets my theories."

"I would give my life to find that story true."

"Then, Colonel Lyle, the search is in your hands. If in your course of steaming up and down, you happen to seek a shelter in New York, send to my banker, Caleb C. Clamm. I will advise him of your coming.

Clamm is intimate with Jecks, the old and trusty lawyer of the Randolph family. Jecks knows more about the house at Riverside than any other man alive. He is supposed to have those family papers in his charge. But I must warn you that he stands on guard, swearing that no such papers are in his possession or within his knowledge."

"If he has got them he shall give them up!"

"No doubt; you are a young man and may get them; I'm an elder and I failed."

Cridge speaks below his breath, and Leonard misses the remark. His brain is full of heat and passion. Papers that will sweep away this shame from Di! Nine years ago, she asked him what he would do to prove himself her knight. Now she says nothing; he will show her what a man can do without being urged. If he is seeking shelter in New York, send in for Clamm! Caleb C. Clamm, banker, shall not be kept long waiting for the messenger of Leonard Lyle.

Grasping the General's hand, Sir Leonard only adds, "In three weeks we shall anchor in the harbour of New York."

CHAPTER IX.

Frank.

THE last person, the last portmanteau, is on board. Tab has been taken down by Grough, who means to have a breath of air, and go on shore at Brighton or some other port. Joe, while waiting for his master, is saying good-bye to Bessie for the twentieth time. Leonard is in his cabinet writing a formal order to his lawyer, which he means to put into his hands on board,

directing him to be present at Castle Lyle on mid-summer day, when the election is going on. In case the *Foam* has not returned, Grough is to deliver two letters, now enclosed, one letter addressed to the Duke, his grandfather, the other to Boggs, his chairman.

"Say as little as you can," he ends his letter of instructions to his lawyer, Grough; "but if she asks you questions which you cannot parry, think of your own daughter, and speak to her as in such a trouble you would like a man to deal with your own child."

Grace comes in quietly, as he is sealing up this note. Grace is like an inmate of the house, loved as much by man as wife, and comes and goes exactly like a member of the family. If she were Diana's sister, Leonard could hardly treat her with more affection and respect.

"Leonard, I am groping in the dark, and cannot feel my way. What is the matter with us all? Your purposes and motives are an equal mystery. I see your plans are changing every moment. Warren orders you a cruise, and you profess to act on his advice. But you are acting on some other plan. I went just now into his room, and found him mixing up some drugs. I am a Georgian woman, and I know what chills and sunstrokes are. You're going on a distant voyage. Why are you going?"

"Grace, dear, do not press me to reply."

"Shall I then ask your wife?"

"Yes, Grace, you may ask her, but not yet. Tomorrow will be time enough."

"You tell me it is not her fault?"

"From the day when she was born until this mo-

ment I believe that she has never done a thing that men and angels might not have seen her do."

"Then, Leonard, I shall never see my way: for if the fault is yours she'll never tell me—even by a glance."

"Good-bye, dear Grace; be with her all you can. She loves you, and will feel less lonely in your company. God bless you all!"

He sends no last adieu to her. Grace thinks it hard that he should sail away—into the tropics and such distant parts—without a last adieu to Di. And yet she must not speak of it. "But I will set Frank on him," she comforts herself; "yes, I'll watch him when he leaves, and set Frank on him. He will hardly break away from Frank."

Joe pulls his forelock to her as she passes down the hall.

"You're going to leave your sweetheart, Joe?"

"A bit, not long. I'se coom afore the banns be called."

Poor fellow! Touched by all this misery of parting, Grace goes in and whispers Bessie that the lad is waiting in the hall to say good-bye. That damsel readily puts her nose outside the door.

"Is that you, Joe?"

"Aye, Bess; I'm coom to say good-bye once more."

"This time you're really going to go—for really and for sure?"

"Aye, all serene. For really and for sure."

"Well, cheer up, Joe, and think of what she has to bear. It's bad enough for him, it's worst of all for her. He's got to sail about and do things; she's only got to

mope and cry. I dare say we'll get on; we're not your crying sort. So don't you fancy when you're eating yams and riding ponies backwards that anybody's wives and sweethearts are just crying their eyes out; for they won't be; there, that's flat!"

"But there's the banns, lass; they're put up in church."

"Well, Joe, they'll keep. You stick to him, I'll stick to her—no matter what folks say."

"Well, give a chap one kiss afore he goes."

"There, Joe; good-bye."

Leonard, coming from his cabinet, pauses to observe this picture.

"You've been a good girl, Bessie, and I'll not forget you. Serve your lady in my absence as you have done. That will please me. Go, now, to your lady's room."

"And give her my master's love? Do let me say my master's love."

"Go, go!"

"'Twould do her more good than all the physic in Dr. Lamber's house!"

"Begone!"

Bessie, abashed and awed, slips in, and Leonard, after watching till she shuts the door behind her, turns to Joe, and says, "That girl shall have a dowry when she settles."

"May I mention it?" asks Joe.

"The dowry? Well."

"Make it the Lyle Arms. The old 'uns are getting tired; and that would be the place for Bess."

"We'll see to that on our return: now to the gig. I shall be down almost as soon as you."

Joe darts away, and Leonard passes through the

morning-room into the lady's bower, to get his last impression of a place where he has been so happy, and which he may never see again. Grace comes into the room, bringing in Frank, as if by accident.

"Papa!" pouts Frank, a little shy.

"My darling!" and the lad is in his father's arms.

"Look at my drum, papa; it won't play now."

"Ah, it is muffled, like ourselves. You see, Frank, while we have sickness in the house we must not make a noise. Mamma's not well."

"She's quite well; come and see. Why don't you come?"

"Well, Frank, I'm like this drum—tied up, you see. The doctor says she must be quiet; she is not to see people."

"People! You're not people, dear papa."

"No, Frank; but then one talks and makes a noise."

"She won't mind that, papa. She wants you."

"No, Frank; don't say that."

"She does; she's always asking, Where's papa? Come in and see, now."

"How does she look, Frank?"

"Oh, so pretty! She is younger than my angel now."

"My boy!"

He clasps his child and looks about the room, resting his eyes on that empty space above the mantelpiece, where a little sketch of Sarpedon used to hang. Grace notes the movement of his eyes.

"You want something, Leonard?"

"No——"

"I understand; it is the portrait. You are wondering where it is and why it has been removed?"

He twines his fingers through the child's abundant locks, and waits for her to speak.

"It's not her doing, Leonard. When she was at the worst, wandering and staring most, Warren took that portrait to her room. It was the only thing that fixed and tamed her eye."

He rises, takes the child's hand, and leads him by the spiral stair into the garden.

"Sit on my knee, Frank."

"Yes, if you will come and see mamma."

"When she is better, Frank."

"Yes, I suppose she must be ill—she asks such funny things."

"What funny things, Frank?"

"You'll not believe it! Why, she asks me whether you love me. Just think, papa, if *you* love *me*!"

Leonard starts to his feet, puts down the child, and dashing at a bush, cuts out a red rose.

"Frank, give me a kiss, and take this rose into her room."

"Shall I tell you what she'll do with it?"

"Yes; what will she do?"

"First, she'll kiss me for bringing it; then she'll hold it to her lips, a long time; then she'll put it in her dress."

"Good-bye, Frank."

"You are going away! Take me, and take mamma."

"Here, Frank, the rose; run in and take mamma the rose."

CHAPTER X.

Adieu.

"ALMOST out of sight!" exclaims Diana to his Excellency, General Cridge, as they stand near the flag-staff; watching the *Foam* as she drops below the horizon, leaving a trail of smoke from south to north.

"They are, my child—almost."

"Another moment, and they will be gone, Uncle John. When do you think he will return?"

"She's gone at last. Return, my child? Well, let me see. How long were those knights away in search of the Holy Graal?"

"I don't remember, Uncle John. What has the Holy Graal to do with Leonard?"

"A good deal—as the object of a journey."

"How so? What is the Holy Graal to us?"

"My child, the days of chivalry are coming back. Sir Leonard is preparing for the part of a new Galahad."

"Sir Galahad, Uncle John, never owned a steam-yacht, nor made a cruise in search of health."

"Sir Leonard has not sailed in search of health."

Diana turns her great blue orbs on Cridge. What does his Excellency mean? Sir Leonard's cruise is certainly one of health. The doctor ordered him to sail. Warren spoke of it, and asked her counsel ere he first mentioned it to her husband. She advised the step, so that his going is partly her own act and deed. She knew her husband had been sitting up of nights; sitting in a close and heated room; so that he

needed rest and change. She pressed the doctor to insist on his going away at once.

"Not sailing for his health!" she wonders; "Uncle John, it was the doctor's order."

"Not a doubt of it, my child. We doctors are a crafty lot. We find out what our patients want, and order them to do what they desire."

"You think he has some purpose then in going away?"

"My child, Sir Leonard has his objects to attain by going to sea, but the recovery of his health is hardly one of the objects in his thoughts."

"You know his objects, Uncle John?"

"In part, if not in whole."

"You'll tell me what they are?"

"Yes, child, you ought to know; in fact, he wishes you to know. Sir Leonard, as I take him, has two objects—the first, practical; the second, speculative."

"What is the first?"

"To silence Tab and Slokk."

"Are Tab and Simon on board the yacht?"

"They are. While he's at sea, their tongues are tied. That makes us safe on shore. No one in England, save ourselves and his solicitor, has any inkling of our secret. What the lawyer knows I am uncertain; but, in any case, he is a man of trust. So long as Tab and Slokk remain at sea, our secrets are secure."

"So long! Will he remain at sea until they die?"

"Unless he lands."

"Lands where? In what direction has he gone? The *Foam* is running southwards, but the southern route means anywhere."

"I fancy he'll go west, and strike New York."

"America! Tell me the whole truth, Uncle John. You said he had a second object, which you called a speculative object. What is that?"

"Men have gone out in search of many things besides the Holy Graal—the Golden Fleece, the Realm of Prester John, the Philosopher's Stone, the Land of Gold, the Elixir of Life."

"Were all those men types of Leonard?"

"Of his second object."

"Has he sailed in search of some such fantasy as the Elixir of Life?"

"He's gone to find a dream; the sceneries and chattels of a dream."

"What dream? Whose dream? Speak plainly, Uncle John. You have some meaning in your words."

"A dream of yours."

"Don't tease me, Uncle John. What dream of mine is carrying Leonard to New York?"

"My child, you will not have it called a dream."

"You are not thinking of my mother's marriage, Uncle John?"

"Mainly, of that."

"And Leonard—whither has Leonard gone?"

"To New York first, to Richmond next."

"What has he gone to seek?"

"For evidence that your dream is true."

"Surely, he feels no doubt of that?"

"No doubt, child?"

"Yes, no doubt. You cannot mean that *he* has any fear about my mother having been my father's wife?"

"Hush, child! You will be overheard!"

"Nay, answer, Uncle John. I know your old mistakes. You thought I was a slave, and born in shame. These errors I have learned to bear. But Leonard! He has never fallen into those mistakes?"

"Mistakes!"

"I say mistakes. I bear with them in you, but not in others. Has my husband lent his ear to this unutterable shame?"

"My child, Sir Leonard heard what you confessed."

"What I confessed! Have pity on my dull and seething wits. What I confessed!"

"Be calm, my child. The yacht is gone. Come down, and let us sit. You'll fag yourself to death."

"No, Uncle John; you must not ask me to be calm. Your words amaze me; take away my breath. As you would answer at the seat of judgment, tell me what *you* suppose my plea of guilty has to do with the fact of my mother being a freeborn woman and my father's lawful wife?"

"Everything. You have confessed."

"Give the thing breath, that I may see your thought."

"Diana, have you not confessed your birth of shame? Don't look so frightened, child. I mean what lawyers call a birth of shame. You know the word is no more mine than the reproach is mine."

"But you imagine I have pleaded guilty to a birth of shame?"

"I understand so."

"Uncle John, is that because you have a theory of your own? I've read that men will go to hell in order to support the theories they set up. Excuse my violence! Does Leonard understand so, too?"

"Beyond a doubt."

"You're sure of that?"

"Diana, this is true, as heaven is true. Have you not called yourself a guilty wretch?"

"But not in that. How could I, Uncle John? I meant in other things; my silence as to that old taint of blood. I never pleaded to a birth of shame."

"My child, then Leonard was misled. So far as I can judge, he has a manly scorn of all that cant. He knows enough to see that living blood is pure. But he is jealous on the score of birth. You see his mother was the daughter of a duke. It galls him past endurance to be told that his son's mother was the daughter of a slave and was herself a slave."

"Bear with me, Uncle John," she breaks in, fighting for her breath and utterance.

"It is on your own plea of bastardy that he proceeds. On that—and nothing else he parted from you; and on that—and nothing else—he made his settlement and will."

Diana struggles to her feet, straightens her spine, holds up her hand, throws back her head. For some time she can only gasp and smile. At length she finds a tongue:

"O, Uncle John, bear with me. I am staggered by these words. I shall be better soon. Such floods of joy are in my heart, that I shall soon be right again."

The soldier tries to humour and engage her thoughts, by going over all that passed between Sir Leonard and himself, as to her theory of those lost family documents. She listens eagerly to his details. When he speaks of Leonard's eagerness to catch at points which

gave him hope, she smiles a beautiful and radiant smile. She knows the man.

When General Cridge has finished, she goes up to him, puts her arm about his neck, and says to him:

"We'll get to work; we'll think of him, and get to work."

"My child?"

"You'll chide me, Uncle John, for superstition; but I know my husband, and I read the future by the past. Such men as he work miracles. Leonard will find those papers; Leonard will come back to me; Leonard will purge my mother's fame. Kiss me, Uncle John. Once more, I am his wife."

BOOK XI.

A T S E A .

PERIOD, 1870.

CHAPTER I.

Outward Bound.

ON steaming out of Port Lyle roads, the *Foam* runs merrily with the wind, her sails all set in order to save her coal. Leonard is acting as his own skipper, for the old sea-dog, though a licensed master, owns a teacher in the young baronet. Cox is a sailor, Leonard a navigator. Cox has no fear of crossing the Atlantic, and of reaching New York in twenty-one days, but he is glad to see the owner of the vessel take the task of ordering matters on himself. No sailor likes to run much risk, and the American ferry is no child's play for a yacht. Leonard is on deck, in yachting uniform, and in full command.

The day is fine, the breeze is fresh. A puff of gentle violence now and then suggests a rising in their rear, but for the moment, they are running with the pale, white waves, going on the starboard tack, and heading south-east. Every one is on deck, and every one save Simon Slokk is noting the nabs and headlands as they speed along, enjoying the bright sunshine and the rippling waters, over which the sea-mews dart and splash.

Simon is ill. Before the chain was up, Simon

rolled over on the deck. Cox, between whom and Simon no love is lost, gave the slave-driver a shove, as he was reeling over, which threw him into a corner near the wheel, among a coil of ropes and chains. It was a hard, damp bed; but no one cared where Simon lay save Tab; and Tab's attempts to do him little offices were repulsed with snorts and kicks. Tab has become to him a plague and curse. She's worse to him, in his conceit, than Lady Lyle. One woman calls him murderer, the other calls him husband. Hang and curse them, both!

No one heeds his groans and curses, save the coloured woman who believes herself his wife. When he is very bad, she mops his face, and helps him to the flask. When she has raised his head, and set him up a little, she stands apart, looking at his shapeless figure and disgusting situation, and then lifts her eyes to the bridge on which Sir Leonard stands, quietly smoking a cigar and giving out commands, his handsome form and noble bearing seen against a ground of azure sky.

"Heavens, what a man!" she sighs.

At sundown they are off Spurn Head, the sea still rising, and the yacht still running on her starboard tack.

"We shall catch a capfull ere the morning, Cox?"

"Yes," replies the rough old salt; "a wind like this would blow us from Land's End to New York in seventeen days."

"Ugh!" puts in Grough, beginning to repent that he accepted Sir Leonard's offer of a little trip.

Sunset brings on rain. At first it comes in drizzle. They can hardly catch the Dudgeon light, and Cox

suggests a more eastern course, in order to avoid the Cromer Sands. Making a point or so towards the east, they give the shore a wider berth, and in the depth of a black and drenching night, drive past the Hasborough lightship; keeping their course through safer, if more riotous waters than those washes off the Norfolk coast.

Leonard now feels his pulse grow steady, and his eye more quick of sight. As Lamber said, this cruising is the physic for a Lyle. His mind, though open to all moral questions, is inclined to shirk mere moral puzzles. In the clash and dash of action he is always to the fore and always at his best. Through all the watches of the night he stays on deck, brine dashing on his face, and ozone sweeping through his lungs. Better than rest and sleep is this excitement of the storm; a counter-irritant in his thews and sinews, to the long-drawn tension of his nerves and brain.

Hour after hour the wind drives on more fiercely, and the rain descends in heavier volumes. Neither land nor sky is seen. He sets his bows towards the Kentish Knock, but with little hope of sighting that welcome and familiar light-ship. Day brings no abatement of the gale.

"We got the capfull," Cox salutes the baronet next morning.

"Yes, Cox, we have caught the wind," replies Sir Leonard, sextant in hand, as he is trying to catch the sun's place for an observation.

"Wind like that would drive us from Land's End to New York in fifteen days."

"Perhaps," assents Leonard, laying his sextant

down, and going to consult his chart. "We're running for the Galloper, I think."

"Within a point or so," returns the sailing-master.

"Head on, then."

No one appears on deck but Simon Slokk. Simon is drunk, and will not go into his berth. He is afraid of Tab, under an impression that her claim to be his wife, now backed by Leonard, is a new peril for him, which he must try to ward off. Good words and bad are lost on him. He is too drunk for reason; and to every effort of the crew to get him in, he answers with a grunt and curse. During the night, Tab came up for him more than once, but could not get him to go down. She looked at him and then at the baronet. Leonard was keeping watch, and piloting the yacht. The lives of all on board were in his hands, and she felt thankful that his hands were not like Simon's hands. Once, the sea-dogs set him on his legs and ran him in; but when their backs were turned he slipt away, and settled down among his ropes and chains. At last, being busy with their own duties, they left him alone—sick, drenched, and huddled in a heap.

All day and night the yacht runs on before the wind, lashed by the furies in her wake. At nightfall they pass a glaring light, seen only for an instant through the gloom.

"North Foreland, Cox?"

"Think not, sir. Any colour in the light?"

"Not sure. It was so quick; more like a gun."

The night grows very dark. Wind, rain, and hail continue to smite the *Foam* behind, while a great sea

storms up in front, like a white ghost, and tries to scare her back. No star, no light is seen.

Deep in the second watch, Leonard calls suddenly—

“Land a-head! A light? there, on the port side?”

“Cape Grinez, sir.”

“Starboard! Hard a-starboard!” Leonard calls to the helmsman. Then he adds to Cox, “West by south. Let us get room to breathe.”

As they turn from the French coast into freer waters, Leonard lies down and sleeps, Cox taking his command. Soon after daybreak, he is up on deck. The rain has ceased, and there are signs ahead that the black curtain may by-and-by be lifted up. Grough is on deck, peering out anxiously from the starboard side in search of any sign of land.

“Enjoyed your trip, Grough?” laughs the young baronet.

“Ugh!”

“Hold on, man! Clutch the sail. You see yon albatross? Know the legend of the albatross at sea?”

“Ugh!” is the only sound that comes from Grough.

“He’s none Yorkshire, too,” grimaces Joe, regarding Grough with pity and contempt.

“All serene, Joe?”

“Aye, Sir Leonard; all serene. You be Yorkshire, too.”

Tab, who has just come up from her cabin, peeps at the group. Here stands Leonard, in the fulness of his youth; blithe, cool, and debonair, guiding every one, doing everything. Near him are the shrinking Grough and the admiring Joe. There in the corner, drenched and sick, coils Simon Slokk. The men are busy all about; and there is much to do in such a

fight with nature; but Sir Leonard seems to Tab the king of men, who can and will control them all. An impulse urges her to step up quickly to the baronet.

"Let me do something," she implores him; "something to earn my bread. I am a woman, and can do a woman's work—wash, scrub, sew, starch, and cook. Try me; I want to work."

Sir Leonard listens, thinking to himself, "Hallo! there is some virtue in this slut."

"If you've no woman's work for me, I'll try at swabbing decks and tarring ropes. You work—why should I not work?"

CHAPTER II.

Off Beachy Head.

WHILE Leonard is listening to Tab, a cry comes from the look-out, "Land a-head!" Leonard looks up. The *Foam* runs under shelter of a down; the wind sinks suddenly away, and the waters, though still rolling high and white, are smoother than they were three minutes since.

"Port, hard a-port!" cries Leonard, looking through a rift in the black curtain towards the land.

"This should be Beachy Head, Cox?"

"That's the east cliff," puts in the sailing-master putting down his helm, and swinging to.

"Head up, old boy!" calls Leonard to his lawyer, "and devote a candle to St. Vincent! Here is land!"

"Ugh!" groans the gentleman from Gray's Inn Square. But catching at the word "land," he murmurs, with an anxious eye, "What land?"

"Fairy Land—the Sussex downs."

Grough mops his face and rubs his eyes, but he can see no sign of land.

"Look, man, in front of you! look up, not down! You see the rift in that cloud? What's there? Blue sky, green hill. A minute more, you'll spy the children playing on the sands; a second minute, and you'll want a parasol to keep the sun off. Joe, my lad, fetch me a parasol."

"Set me on shore! Set me on dry land, Sir Leonard! I'm disgusted with the *Foam*. Call this a little trip to do one good, and bring one pleasant dream?"

"You're not yet much of a salt, Grough."

"Salt—ugh! Sir Leonard, I'm nothing but salt; I'm crusted, pickled, soaked in salt!"

"You've had a pleasant little run?"

"It's done me harm; it's given me horrid dreams. I've been expecting every moment to go down. For two long nights I've thought of nothing but my sins."

"I thought you lawyers never owned to sins?"

"Never in court and office. But a man is not a man when he's at sea, with nothing but a plank between his pillow and his grave. Ugh! In your good old times they used to put a fellow on a rack before asking him to confess his guilt. I'll get the judges to restore that custom; but in place of putting a rascal on the rack, we'll put him on board a yacht in a stiff gale."

"You see the effects on Simon Slokk?"

The vessel being now quiet, the boat that is to carry Grough on shore is ordered to be lowered. While the lads are pulling ropes, and singing their refrain, Leonard steps back to the corner where Simon

lies, and touches him with the toe of his boot, and only touching him with a sniff and shudder of contempt.

"Some schnapps!" yawns the rascal, turning over in his sleep.

"All serene, sir. Give him another pail?" asks Joe, with much alacrity of voice and gesture.

"Leave him alone, Joe; let the vermin doze."

"You'll never make a man of him!" growls Grough, who looks on all this venture as a miserable kind of farce.

"Perhaps not," says Leonard, simply, having no great hope of doing good in that quarter of his yacht.

"Nor a woman of that coloured slut."

"That creature has her points, Grough."

"Points, Sir Leonard? Yes, she has her claws and fangs."

"And something more—pluck, candour, faithfulness. I am inclined to think she has some heart."

"That lying slut—that negro scum?"

"Why not, Grough? In the lowest natures there is something good. The basest scoundrel ever born believes in his mother. Bad as she is, this creature has an instinct for the truth. Look up here, at this rent in the black sky. What do you see? White cliffs, green hills; a land lit up with sunshine. What hid it from your sight just now? A film—an opaque veil of cloud. You take my meaning? No! Well, Grough, if I were able, I should like to rend the pitchy veil that—in this savage woman—hides the better things beyond."

"Ugh! I shall be sick again!"

"All right, Grough. In six months, now, you'd learn to bear——"

"Set me ashore."

"In four hours, Grough, you'll be at Gray's Inn Square."

"Where will you be, Sir Leonard?"

"Well, off Selsey Bill, perhaps; bearing west—for ever west—until we sight New York."

"Sir Leonard, as an old friend of your family——"

"Words are vain. My line is taken, Grough. When I am wanted in a place, I am pretty certain to be there."

"But——"

"Grough, while there's a mouth to gag—I shall be close at hand."

"But such a task may keep you out at sea for years!"

"It may. I know my work."

"What a romantic donkey!" chuckles Grough; who keeps his opinion carefully to himself. Rejoining in a louder voice, Grough says, "Why, this beats Jason, Galahad, and Cœlebs into cockle-shells. Those fellows all went out in search of something real."

"I seek for something real."

"Then, I am blind, Sir Leonard."

"My object is the vindication of her fame."

"Excuse me. Am I deaf, as well as blind? I thought you told me she confessed her guilt?"

"There lies the mystery. If she had not confessed her shame I could have sworn for her myself."

"But having heard her with your ears, having seen her with your eyes——"

"Grough, I remember, when I was a child, not six years old, my nurse accused me to my father of a lie, which I had never told. I had been throwing down a sop to my pet dog, unseen by nurse; and when my

father cried in anger, "Did you do that, Leonard?" I, not knowing what he meant, but thinking of my sop, said boldly, "Yes, papa." And I was punished for a lie on that confession of my guilt."

"How does this story bear on Lady Lyle?"

"Much or not much, as we may find. Her Ladyship, when a girl, had a brain fever, and his Excellency, who was near her at the time, has told me that she got some notions in her head in that delirium, which she has never yet been able to put aside. What she confessed about her being a bastard and a slave, may be a part of this confusion in her memory. I have got some clues, and mean to follow them to the end."

"Well, you're a young man, and you live on hope."

"Grough, this dusky woman gives me hope. There's something on her mind. She's always mumbling in her sleep—mixing my name with that of Lady Lyle in her Virginian days. That savage has a secret on her lips, and I believe that secret is my property. Some day I shall seize it."

"Then we shall see you back at Castle Lyle?"

"As swift as steam and sail can bear me back."

The boat is lowered, the crew are ready to pull in. Leonard takes out his envelope.

"Good-bye, my friend. Here is a letter for you with my last instructions. This contest for the county troubles me. I would decline it, but his Grace laughs at me. On the polling-day, be there; and if I am not there to answer for myself, deliver the two notes enclosed. In everything you do for Lady Lyle, be good and kind; forget my wrongs, and think of her. Think, speak, and act, as you would do for your own child."

"Trust me, Sir Leonard; I will do my duty."

"Nay, do more; duty is cold and formal. In a lawyer's view duty is simply business. Bear in mind, that she is a lady not less proud than sensitive. A look may wound her; an insulting word may kill. She gave her word to wait at Castle Lyle till my return. Hold her to that; it is my only hope. While she remains Frank will be happy. Frank! You will be good to Frank?"

"Sir Leonard, I love that child!"

They wring each other's hands in silence. Joe is standing by with Grough's valise. When Grough is in the boat Joe calls to him, "Here's your portmantle, sir. And after all, I think you be Yorkshire, too!"

"Good-bye! good-bye!" are shouted as the boat slips off.

"Poor Frank!" Sir Leonard says, below his breath, "if all these things are true, thou'lt need to have a good deal of kindness shown to thee, my boy. It's very hard to bear. Son of a slave! Nay, worse than that—a thousand times worse than that! Son of a mother born in shame!"

He turns to the port-side, pacing up and down. Tab watches him, and on his turning round, slips out in front of him, and pleads, "Let me do something for you. I can stoke and poke. Let me do something for you, sir."

Leonard looks at her, calls up the cook, and bids him take this woman to his galley, and let her help him.

"Treat her well, my lad; but let her help."

CHAPTER III.

Due West.

IN twenty minutes' time Grough has been landed on the beach at Eastbourne, and the gig pulled back. The need for action brings up Leonard to his post. Joe is leaning on the starboard side, watching the lawyer, as he wends along the promenade, hustling off the lads who want to carry his valise. Simon is lifting up his head from the pillow of ropes and chains, and fumbling for his flask.

"We shall have wind a-beam all day," says Leonard, as the screw begins to turn. Curling round the cliffs to Berling Gap, he fixes his course due west. His mind is on New York. There need be little southing now. A course due west, with now and then a point or so on the port side will carry him to the Hudson River, and the banking-house of Caleb C. Clamm.

As Beechy Head recedes into the distance, he salutes the cliffs and downs, so like his Yorkshire nabs and wolds, but only with a yearning eye and silent tongue. There is a castle on a cliff in that great northern shire, in which his fathers sleep, and he should also sleep when he has won his rest. That castle holds his dearest treasures of the earth, his wife and child. On these dear treasures he has turned his back, and now, in the large freedom of the sea, he finds that hunger of the heart spring up, which absence from their sight can never stay. Where is she now? Mayhap in her private garden, which she loves so much, and by the flag-staff which commands that stretch of sea! Too well he knows her mind. She's gazing outward in the track of that vanished sail, and

looking vainly for that drift of lingering smoke. How she will gaze and gaze!

"Come, Leonard, Leonard—this will never do!" he pulls himself up. "Your thoughts must fall on New York now. What sort of man is Clamm? How soon can you be closeted with Jecks?"

Due west, all day, the course is held.

Joe, having no longer to keep an eye on Tab, seems listless and depressed, moping about the deck, yawning over the bulwarks, and, in short, down in the mouth.

"Hullo!" twits Leonard, coming on his servant un-awares; "what's up, my lad? Not looking back, wishing thyself at home again?"

"All serene, Sir Leonard. Never mind; it's all serene."

"Eh! not blubbering, Joe?"

"It's all serene. Well, Sir Leonard, I cudna help thinking, just a little bit, o' Bess, not when *he* was a-going off, like."

"The banns, I think, Joe, are up in church?"

"They're twice on axing, Sir; twice on axing." And the fellow, who is usually all fight and song, begins to mop and whimper. Leonard looks at his groom in pity.

"Joe, my lad, we'll set thee, too, on shore."

"No, no, Sir Leonard. Don't do that. I won't go back till you go back. Why, Bess 'ud chuck me up."

"She'd not chuck thee up, lad, for going back to her."

"She would, though. All serene. She'll wait. And isn't she with my lady?"

"If you've the heart to go on, Joe, go with a brave heart. You're right about the girl. She'll wait. I tell you, Joe, when that girl settles, she shall have her choice of any house on my estate."

"Not the Lyle Arms?"

"The Lyle Arms, if she chooses, Joe."

No more is said, for Leonard, peering through the mists, which have again come down, closing above the vessel like a pall, observes the great sea-horses rioting past at an increasing speed. There is a promise of a dirty night. If he were yachting for his pleasure, Leonard would certainly, he thinks, run into Ryde or Cowes, but he is driven by sterner gales than a nor-easter towards his haven in New York. Three weeks! He means to keep that vow to General Cridge. Giving Selsey Bill, and even St. Catherine's Point, a wide berth, he dips to the wind blowing hard from shore, and holds his course on the starboard tack, straight for Wolf Rock, which he passes in the night of the next day after leaving Beechy Head, running between that islet and St. Mary, straight into the Atlantic Ocean, far from all further sight and sound of land.

The night is dark and wet, but Simon still remains on deck. He will not sleep in bed, nor will he occupy his berth. At times he bumps and stumbles to the men's room, in the forecastle, but he never ventures to his proper place on board. Among the men, he feels at home. Some evil thing is sure to happen if he goes to his own quarters in the yacht. Tab will be there, of course. If he were left alone, he might settle things with Tab; but there is Joe at hand, with his hard fist, and the remembrance of that flick across his eyes to goad him on. And then there is the baronet. Sir Leonard has become aware of his false charge. Why hasn't he paid him out? That souse in the horse-pond was for other things. An ugly score remains unpaid. Sir Leonard puzzles him. If he knows about the fallen stones and stolen papers, why has he not

yet charged him with his crimes? What is he driving at? Of one thing only Simon feels assured. They mean to rob him of his ring and papers, and to do it secretly and quietly, letting no one know. They shan't. He'll never let them get a chance. They shall not cage him in a cabin, where they might overpower him in his sleep, with not a soul to see what they were doing. While he stays on deck among the sea-dogs, he fancies he has some defence against his enemies, and especially against his wife.

Joe has the malice to engage his chum, the purser, in a lark. The sea-dogs like to see this Dutchman drunk. They call him, like the ladies at Niagara, Mynher van Dunk. By the connivance of that purser, Simon's flask is filled, and filled again, with various liquors—whisky, vitriol, gin, and spirits of turpentine. These mixtures all go down the overseer's throat.

At dead of night, as they are running past the Seven Stones lighthouse, Tab steals up on deck, being anxious for the man—a white man, and in her view, utterly unfit to be out on such a night of wind and rain. She feels about the deck for him, and when she finds him in the dark he greets her question with a curse. He tells her to be gone. She tries to raise his head. He kicks and plunges. "Get away," he screams. Why do they want him to go below? To rob him—perhaps to murder him? He will not budge. Distressed by his condition, she stands apart, and looks at the dark heap, on which, as on herself, the rain is beating heavily. Unable to do more, she stoops and tries to cover up his feet. As she leans forward, on her hands and knees, drawing a tarred sheet across his legs, he launches out his hoof, like a mad horse, striking her a savage blow on the face with his nailed

boot, tearing the flesh from her bruised cheek, and dabbling her hands and her attire with blood.

Stung by the blow, so wanton, so unjust, Tab clutches her fingers round the bowie-knife in her dress, and stands above him at the spring. Simon seems near the end of his bad life, but in a trice her purpose changes, and in place of piercing him between the ribs, she steadies her hand on a stanchion, hisses between her teeth, puts up her knife, gropes for the flask, and holds it close to his lips, until he sucks himself to sleep.

She lifts his hand, to see if he is conscious. As he only snores in answer, she singles out his fourth finger, draws away a ring, and puts it on the third finger of her own left hand. Faint with her pain, she steals back quietly to her berth below.

CHAPTER IV.

At Sea.

Two days and nights pass by without much change. These sea lanes of the north are seldom calm; now they are running high, the breezes stiffening into gales. Happily, fogs keep off, and the *Foam* spans along merrily; the log at times showing as much as thirteen knots an hour.

Every one is well, and in high spirits, excepting always Simon, who appears to be sinking more and more. Tab works at her pots and pans, and rubs at the bits of brass, as though she were in port, keeping the yacht on view, as a marvel of shining rails and well-scrubbed decks.

Leonard observes her zeal, as well as her untiring strength. "Tell me," he inquires of Joe, "if you still think that woman in her wits?"

"I can't a-make her out, like. One time, she's in her wits, all safe; another time, she's agone clean daft."

"I suppose you call her crazy when she's slobbering after that beast in the corner?"

"Them's the time, Sir Leonard, when she's madder nor a March hare."

"But then, Joe, if she really is the rascal's wife?"

"Well, Sir Leonard, I think as how she be his wife."

"What is your reason, Joe?"

"I see him wallop her."

"Is that your only reason, Joe?"

"Ain't that enough? Would any fellow hit a woman if so be she ain't his wife?"

"You never heard of such a man?"

"Not down in Yorkshire. I ha' heered such things in London. That don't count. London folks a'nt jannuk. No chap, as is a chap, standing up fair, toe to toe, 'ud strike a woman, 'cept she was his wife."

As they approach the coil of rope and chain, on which Simon grunts and snores, uneasily, like a bear with a bad paw, Leonard excites the sleeper by a touch with the end of his boot. Turning on his side, the fellow asks for schnapps.

Getting no answer in the shape of a bottle, he bawls for "Taab—Taab Crump—Contessa Taab!"

As no one comes, he clenches his fist, jerks out his leg, and yells for Madame Slokk.

"He's calling for Madame Slokk," thinks Leonard. "That is some admission that she is his wife."

"Taab!" grunts the fellow. "Schnapps! No schnapps? I flog you into fits."

"Telled you, Sir Leonard, that she be his wife," Joe triumphs, in this final proof.

"Quick, lads, a pail of water. Schnapps! A pail—he's got too dry."

Joe snatches a pail of water, and, remembering his old antagonist of the negro-yard at Riverside, dashes the contents in the overseer's squinting eyes and yawning mouth.

"Oh!" groans the wretch.

"Another pail, Joe. But before you douch him, tell him that's for threatening to flog his wife into fits. We'll give him fits; eh, Joe?"

The Yorkshire lad requires no egging on. The crack of a certain whip is in his ear; the smart of that whip is on his cheek. Dash goes the second pail into Simon's chaps. Shaken, if not sobered, by his mid-day bath of salt water, Simon rolls himself about, feels for his knees, and with Joe's hand to cling to, sways and wobbles to his feet. Staring at Leonard, through his wet and unkempt hair, he holds out his empty flask in pitiful appeal for one more dram: "Some schnapps."

Leonard takes the flask from his hand, sniffs at the open neck with a shiver of disgust, and jerks it over the starboard side into the waves.

"Dat mein flashk!" squeaks Simon, with a dull but pricking sense of being somehow robbed, killed, and flung into the sea. Joe darts at him. "Murder, murder!" roars out Simon, in a voice which brings Tab, bo'son, stoker, and the sea-dogs to his side.

"Coom, all serene, old chap!" remonstrates Joe, clutching him below the elbow. "If you bellow like that, you'll have to be gagged."

More than once in his career Simon has been gagged, and his recollection of the process fills him with abject terror. Staring at Joe, and then at Joe's

master, he drops his pitch, and the loud clamour sinks into a feeble whine.

"Now, fellow!" Leonard bristles, in an accent of disgust, which he takes no further trouble to conceal; "look on this woman's face. You see her?"

"Shee dat nig?"

"She is a coloured woman, not a negress. If you use that word again, you'll have another pail."

Joe fills the pail, and sets it down near Simon's feet, all ready for a dash.

"Goot, goot; she yallow gal."

"Now, look at that pail, and say—is she thy wife?"

Simon squints round the bulk-head, as though he missed the point of this query; but Sir Leonard thinks it is simple cunning to gain time. Joe whispers in Simon's ear, "Best tell the truth, old chap. He's sure to find it out, and then, just like that flask, you—jerk."

"Is she thy wife?" the baronet asks in a yet sterner tone.

"Von — yah. 'Merica great country. Out dere, man plenty vife."

"A pluralist! The rogue confesses a plurality of wives. Say, now, was she the first wife?"

"Firsht? She lasht. Firsht vife in Viper Flat."

The click and ring in the old slave-driver's voice sound false as in a pewter shilling. Leonard feels sure that he is piling lie on lie. Tab stands apart, abashed and troubled; but he thinks her honest in her claim to be this fellow's wife. Pointing to a space in front, Sir Leonard says, "Stand out there, face to face. Now, woman, answer me. Is this man your husband?"

"Yes," replies Tab, with emphasis.

"Your only husband?"

"Yes," she repeats, without a pause. This time the click and ring seem true.

"Now, fellow, answer me. Is this woman thy wife?"

"Sort of vife; brevet rank."

"That's a lie. He married me in church."

"By book and ring?" asks Leonard.

"Yes, by book and ring. I'll swear it on my knees." And the dark woman flings herself at Leonard's feet, with hands held up to swear.

"Stand up!" says Leonard, kindly, giving her his hand, which she snatches to her lips and kisses. "Stand up, woman; I believe your word."

The quadroon lifts her eyes to his. A strong emotion floods her face as she exclaims, "You take my word! A coloured woman's word!"

"Why should I not believe your word?"

"I am a yellow woman. I was born a slave. My mother was a slave. Don't you expect me to tell you nothing but lies?"

"No, my poor woman. Why? Do you expect a lie from me?"

"You are a white man. That's another game. A white man is too proud to lie."

"It is for you to be as proud. A dusky skin is nothing, if the soul be pure and white. You say he married you with book and ring. Show me that bridal ring."

She holds her left hand out, and points to her third finger, round which is coiled an antique wedding ring. Leonard and Simon watch her movement. Simon starts, feels at his little finger, misses Frank Randolph's pledge, and groans between his teeth, "Mein Gott, she rob me! She hab shtole dat ring!"

CHAPTER V.

My Ring.

UNAWARE of what is passing in the overseer's mind, Leonard points to the ring on the quadroon's finger, and calls out to Simon: "Who gave this woman that wedding ring?"

"Me give no ring," he answers doggedly, but with a sickening heart.

"Is that another lie, Tab?"

"No, Sir Leonard, that is true. This hoop was mine. The man was mean enough to borrow it, and marry me with my own ring."

"Was it your mother's ring?" the baronet asks, still unaware how near he is standing to a great discovery.

"No," answers Tab, in quick, but serious syllables, "I won't deceive you——"

"Hish!" scowls Simon, with an ugly squint, fearing that she is going to blab out all. She takes no notice of his warning, for her thoughts are turned another way than his.

"No," she goes on, "my mother was a slave; she never had a ring."

Sir Leonard takes her hand in his, to look more closely at the hoop of gold. It is a curious ring for such a woman to possess; an ancient ring, heavy, and of Italian art.

"Will it come off, Tab?"

Simon shuffles up behind and whispers her aside:

"He'll find us out; den—jerk, all down."

Leonard observes them keenly. The quadroon seems lost in thought; but in a moment she regains her senses, slips the ring off, and offers it to the baronet.

"Take it, Sir Leonard; it is yours."

"Polecat!" screams Simon in her ear, "it's *hers*; he'll find us out!"

"Can't help it, Simon," she replies, in a resigned and broken voice.

"Den ve go—jerk."

"Can't help it, Simon," she replies again.

"You like dem shark?"

"He drives me, Simon; as a dog drives sheep, he drives me, Simon; as a hunter drives elk, he drives me, Simon."

Standing apart, and holding up the ring between his thumb and finger, Leonard keeps an eye on his strange guests. He sees the scowling brow, he hears the snapping tone. They're on the verge of deadly quarrels, and the adage warns him what may chance when rogues fall out. He listens, while affecting to regard the hoop of gold.

"What can I do?" Tab asks the man she claims as lawful spouse.

"Noder big lie."

"I won't."

"Dere is no oder shance."

"I will not do it, Simon. At your bidding, I have paid out lie for lie, and stab for stab; what I did then, I am ready, on your orders, to repeat. But when you bid me pay out lies for truth, and stabs for kindness, I refuse to do it. Lie to him again! Never, Simon, never!"

Not a word of her reply is lost on Leonard, who reports to his own mind the effect of her speech on him: "There is some virtue in that dusky skin; none, not a particle, in that white. He is a moral leper."

Once more he turns his eyes on the golden hoop. It is a strange ring for a coloured bride, he thinks;

for he is something of a knowing one in rings; and this particular specimen is of fine Italian art; the sort of love-gage which a cardinal's nephew might have given the daughter of a prince. This gage, no doubt, was stolen, but from whom? It is the woman's, not the man's. Can he compel her to disclose the facts? She may have stolen it; she may have found it; and she may have got it as a gift. Such things are happening every hour. If she declines to say, he has no means of forcing her to speak. Stay; there is something on the ring itself. A love-knot? Aye, a love-knot, and a posy too. Yes, here's a name. F? Yes, that's F. These letters are not ancient like the ring. They're modern and fantastic; that's the reason they're so hard to read. But Leonard perseveres. F. R. Not a doubt of it; the second letter must be R. The third is A. "Frank, at a guess?" he cries, but only to his anxious heart. Led by his clue, he soon makes out the N. and K. There now, the first name stands confessed as Frank. What next? He goes to work once more, encouraged mightily by his first success. A coat of dirt and grease, which fills the cuttings in the gold, is now removed, and a strong magnifier used in reading the delicate words. The whole comes out—clear, crisp, decisive—

FRANK TO HIS WIFE DIANA RANDOLPH.

Here is a discovery to have made! Why, such a gage is worth a thousand voyages on the Atlantic Ocean. In a week he has found his Golden Fleece; by accident (if there be such a thing as accident), he has won his Holy Graal. "Frank to his wife." There is another Frank, for whom that sentence is the gladdest of glad tidings. "To his wife, Diana!" There

is a second Diana, for whom that sentence is nothing less than peace regained, honour confirmed, and love restored.

Leaving the pair on deck, Tab snarling at Simon, Simon bridling at Tab, Leonard goes down into his cabin, and makes two copies of these inscribed words, with drawings of the ring. He slips the ring on his little finger and finds it fit. "Lie there," he pats it tenderly, "till I can place it on the hand of Di!"

Taking some sheets of paper, he prepares to write, but when the moment comes to put his thoughts into definite shape, he pauses and regards the ring with restless and inquiring eyes. What has he gained? Some evidence that Senator Randolph was a married man, and that his wife was named Diana? That, for him, is evidence enough. Will it be so to others? That he cannot say. A ring may lie, as tombstones have been known to lie, and parish registers have been known to lie. Any one may buy a ring, and put what words he pleases on that ring. There might be a "presumption" of law, in favour of Frank Randolph having caused these words to be inscribed on this particular piece of metal, but a "presumption" of law, to be useful, must be buttressed by supporting proof. What proof has he? Not a particle, as yet. Even if he could show that Senator Randolph caused that ring to be inscribed, he would be only one step nearer to his end. The gift might be construed into proof of an intention to marry; but proof of an intention to marry is no evidence that a marriage has taken place. Here, again, there might be a presumption of law, but a presumption of law never yet satisfied a judge. There must be evidence of some kind which is free from cavil. It is something to have found that

ring. It satisfies his mind, and gives him hope. On his arrival at New York, he can now assume a bolder tone. This ring will stagger Jecks, and perhaps induce that cautious gentleman to disclose himself. Having turned the matter over, and resolved what he will do, Leonard resumes his pen:—

“At Sea, May 25, 1870.

“MY DARLING DI,

“Providence has placed your mother’s wedding-ring in my hands. It is now on my finger, waiting for the hour when it can be removed to yours. I forward you a drawing with a copy of the words inscribed. Fever, you see, had taken shape, and a mere slip of memory has led us into much confusion and misery. I mean to make the promise good. If I return, you’ll get the ring; if not, you’ll know that the hoop is on my finger and the consecration in my heart.

“Ever your devoted Husband,

“LEONARD LYLE.”

Making two copies of this note, he folds in each a copy of the inscription, and addresses them to Diana, Lady Lyle. Going up on deck, he delivers these two notes to Cox and Joe, with orders, that, in case of accident by sea, the first who gets on shore shall carry his missive to Lady Lyle. So far to each alike; and now, drawing Joe aside, the baronet shows him the new ring on his finger, and tells him that in case of any accident, he is to draw that ring and carry it to Lady Lyle. “It was her mother’s wedding-ring, Joe.” “All serene, Sir Leonard; but no accident’s going to happen.”

Leonard seeks his guests. Yes, there they are, at hiss and curse; so loud that every one can hear their words,

"Hell-cat!"

"Hound—sot!" retorts the woman, glancing at the baronet, and feeling bolder in his company.

"I flog you into fits; flay you alive!"

"His eyes are on me; I'll be bold now," she encourages herself; and then with a quick sweep of hand and body, she is close to Simon, brandishing a bowie-knife.

"Simon, you see this blade?"

The bully winces: "Dat, Tom Trapper knife."

"You've seen this blade at Viper Flat?"

"I shaw him in Tom Trapper belt."

"And you remember how Tom Trapper bullied me and threatened me with his whip?"

"Tom dreaten every ding—man, hoss, dog, nigger."

"But he never bullied me again!"

"Poor Tom!"

"Nor ever raised his fist against another woman?"

"No; he gone! Over de range, dat Tom!"

"And you—slave-driving hound! You'll flog me into fits—flay me alive! Out, villain!"

Leonard darts in between the woman and her prey, and with a wave of his uplifted hand asserts his place and power.

"Put up that knife!"

Tab drops her weapon and her head, while Simon stumbles and recoils, as though he feared an onset from Sir Leonard even more than from his wife. When there is peace, Sir Leonard turns on Tab, and in a kindly accent speaks to her,—

"Look up, woman: tell me where you got this bridal ring?"

CHAPTER VI.

Legend of Viper Flat.

RECOILING from the ring almost as cravenly as from the knife, Simon shrinks back, still more believing that his hour has come, when he will be arrested, searched, given up to justice. Everything is wrong with him. He has lost his flask; he has lost his ring. Next, he will lose his papers, and a few days later he will lose his life. He hulks away, trying to hide his face, and get some cover from the bulkheads. Tab droops under Leonard's gaze, and pointing at Simon, says in miserable tones:

"He married me in Viper Flat. He now denies it; but he married me in Viper Flat."

"Stand up, my poor woman; to your feet; look up; fear nothing; speak the truth."

Tab murmurs to herself, her eyes still drooping to the ground; "He pities me! I could do anything for such a man!"

"My poor woman, I recollect you could not read or write. Let me explain. This ring was once the property of Senator Randolph, and was given by him on his marriage to his wife, Diana, the lady you call Dinah Crump."

The quadroon stares at him in wonder. What a fearful man he is! How could he learn all that? He's like an Obi man, or medicine man.

"How came you by this bridal ring?"

Tab glances round at Slokk, who squints and scowls at her with an expression that would be diabolical if it were not relaxed and imbecile. She then replies to Leonard in a sort of helpless fury:—

"Sir, I am a liar and a slut. I only know bad

things—cogged dice, marked cards, clipt coin, flash notes. If you want any evil done, I'll do it for you. I can drug a cup, tell fortunes, pass the office, draw a gun, swear oaths, and break them. I am very bad."

"Poor thing! the worse you are, the more you need such help as mine. Speak out, and trust me."

"Trust you! I would die for you."

Slokk howls. Tab makes a dart at him, but pauses in her rush, and after mocking him by a hiss, wheels round and cries:—

"That man's my husband. I have followed him for years, and been his slave. He married me at Viper Flat. I loved him, then; it was my craze to wed a white. I got him; he was mine. He made me toil and cheat. I was a wretched slave; more wretched as this white man's wife than as a planter's drudge. Now, he denies me. All my love is gone; but he's my husband; and I claim no more than what is right. Make him unsay his words—own me as his wife, and I will let him go. He's beaten me a thousand times. I was a coloured woman and could bear his blows, but I have never raised my hand on him till now. He was a white man. Now the thing is over. I have raised my hand against his life. My heart is lifted up against him still. I dare not live with him, nor dares he live with me. A devil has got into my blood, and if he were to strike me, I should kill him now. Let him admit our marriage, and be gone."

"If he will not—?" asks Leonard.

"Make him!" she rejoins. "You can do anything. Make him unsay those words, and I will give that lady back into your arms as spotless in repute as she appeared in your eyes on her bridal day."

"You can do that?"

"I can unswear the lies he bade me swear; and, most of all, those lies which brand her as a bastard and a slave."

"Then, all that story was a lie?"

"If you will make that man admit my —— nay," she turns aside, communing for a moment with herself. "He is a man—a true white man." Then she flashes out aloud to him: "You shall hear the truth, unfettered by a pledge. You bade me trust you, and I will."

"There's some true metal in this creature," Leonard thinks while waiting for her speech. She seems to be engaged in hunting after words. Yes, there is something he will do before she speaks.

"Excuse me, for an instant, my good woman; let me have one word alone with Simon Slokk."

Joe takes her elbow, which she yields without a murmur now, and paces towards the bow, while Leonard beckons Simon to stand out, and answer for himself. Simon retires still more behind the bulkheads. He is certain that the baronet now means to jerk him overboard as he jerked that flask.

"Stand out—and answer. Put away that stuff about brevet and legal partners, and reply to me—as trigger answers touch—is she thy only wife?"

"Shir Leonard——"

"Only one word more—then yea or nay. We're steering for New York."

Simon falls back, as from a stab. Reeling against a stanchion, he stares at the young baronet with his fishlike eyes, and gasps:

"New York!"

Leonard is puzzled. Why should the name of New York strike him like a stab? Can it be that

affair in which General Cridge is moving? If it be so, Simon is guilty, and he fears to face a court of justice. Leonard would give much to know. The General never specified the charge, and Leonard could not recollect the name of a single person in New York, except the banker's. Caleb C. Clamm was a friend of General Cridge. By chance there may be some connexion in the names. He tries a shot:

"We're steering for New York; we've business in that city with the banker, Caleb C. Clamm."

Simon rolls over with a groan.

"Sped!" thinks Leonard; "now I have him in my clutch. The charge against him is some forgery on Clamm."

Some time is lost in getting Simon on his legs, and bringing him to his senses. Bo'son assists to prop him up, and the sight of a pail of water freshens out his brain.

"Mark me, Simon Slokk," the baronet, now master of his game, begins: "Tab has friends, who may do much for her, but will not move a step for thee. Now, in a word—is she thy legal wife?"

With an alacrity almost abject, Simon answers him: "Dat woman ish my vife."

"Thou art prepared to make an oath?"

"Shwear him on any book."

Leonard pulls out his Greek Testament, and after swearing Simon in the usual manner, bids him repeat these words:—

"I, Simon Slokk, of Viper Flat, bachelor——"

"Dat wrong. Me vidower; moosh vidower—many timesh."

"Then all thy other wives are dead?"

"Shome die, shome bolt, and shome divorce. Poor vidower, left alone mit Taab; nodings but Taab."

"Repeat," says Leonard, "after me—was duly and lawfully married to Tabitha Crump, spinster, in the said township of Viper Flat, according to the laws in force.—Now swear, and sign."

Simon swears and signs; he would do anything in a day of peril; and he thinks the present peril great and near. But he is hardly conscious of the bearing of his act; nor does he care to seek more closely; for to him an oath is but a word, and when he comes to land—if it is any part of Sir Leonard's scheme to let him land—that pledge will hamper him no more than a puff of smoke.

"Now, Simon Slokk," adds Leonard, in a gayer voice, for an enormous stone, darker and bigger than Black Knob, is lifted from his heart, "we see each other's game. And, now, about that gal at Viper Flat?"

"Dat gal ish all in shmoke."

"Ah, yes; I see. A film. One blow, she vanishes. There is no gal in Viper Flat?"

"You no tell Taab? Nodings keep Taab in order, 'cept dat gal in Viper Flat."

"No, Simon. Thou shalt tell that tale thyself. Joe! bring up Mrs. Slokk."

She answers to her name with a quickened step and shining face.

"Mrs. Simon Slokk," says Leonard, giving her the benefit of her recovered dignities, "your husband has a legend which he wants to tell you about a girl in Viper Flat, Nevada."

"He dares to speak about her! Where's my knife?"

"Stay, Mrs. Slook. You're hasty. She's a very poor sort of rival, is that gal in Viper Flat; so poor she hasn't got a foot to her shoe, nor a back to her gown."

"You're mocking me, Sir Leonard?"

"No, Mrs. Slook. There is no gal in Viper Flat. Here is an affidavit sworn and signed. According to his statement made on oath, you are the only woman with a right to call herself Mrs. Simon Slokk."

"That's all serene," adds Joe.

CHAPTER VII.

Remorse.

IN spite of Joe's assertions, the man and wife, newly made one again, are anything but serene. Simon, on his part, scowls and groans. All is not right within. The purser thinks it may be the vitriol. Sir Leonard thinks it must be Clamm. Joe has a notion that it's only Tab. Some organ has gone wrong inside, and the disorder speaks in audible grunts and groans.

Tab is absorbed uneasily in her own thoughts, and in the paper which has just been sworn and signed. Her head hangs down, her eyes, though wet with tears, flash fire, and her excited fingers twitch about the paper. When the storm goes by, she flings her arms out, and exclaims in wildest terror:

"I am damned to hell!"

"Hush, woman!"

"No, I cannot hush! I must speak out. I shall be burnt in everlasting fire!"

A wave of Leonard's hand tells Joe to carry Simon off. Where to? No matter, any place will serve; his berth, his coil of ropes, his coffin—if he like. Slokk hulks away, broken in spirit, muttering to himself that they have found him out, that they are taking him to New York, that they will give him up to Clamm, that they will lodge him in the Tombs!

Then Leonard turns on Tab, who stands before him, haggard, worn, and bowed; her face and figure broken by a misery more acute than that of her despairing mate.

"What have you done, that you should fear those everlasting fires?" asks Leonard, speaking in a low and kindly tone.

"Done!" she starts, flinging up her arms once more in passion and remorse. "Have I not covered her with shame? Have I not lacerated you with wounds?"

"If you have sworn a lie against her purity of birth," he answers, in a graver accent, "your offence against her—and against me as her husband—has been very great."

"You'll never overlook my crime!"

"If you have sworn a lie against that mother and that child, well knowing that your oath was false, the burden of that sin against the sanctities of married love will rest on you a thousand times more crushing than the weight of any sentence passed by mortal judge."

"Kill me! I am unfit to live!"

"Woman, you are unfit to die. Only the pure in heart are fit to die."

"What shall I do? Tell me, what shall I do?"

"Live, and repent. Live, and undo the evil you have done. Live, and regain your self-respect."

Cowering at his feet, she smothers her dark face in her yet darker hands. Sobs break from her—deep, slow, and agonizing sobs. At length she starts to her feet, as though some plan had come to her which she must carry out at once, and pointing to his fingers, bids him look at the bridal-ring. He looks at it, laying his finger on the gold.

"You know it?" she inquires.

"I know the original owner of this hoop."

"And you want to know the others?"

"Yes, if there be others."

"And you think I know?"

"Yes, I am confident you know."

"And fancy I am going to tell the truth?"

"Yes; I am confident that you will speak the truth."

Turning aside, she mutters to herself, "I'm sore afraid. It is so strange! And what will Simon say?"

The name of Simon seems to sting her—and she sweeps suddenly round towards the baronet, and inquires if he is sure that it is wrong for a coloured person to tell a lie? Leonard assures her it is the blackest sin that either white men or coloured men can commit. But is it wrong in a slave? Yes, he assures her, it is just as wrong in the servile class as in the free.

"Suppose you're told to do it?" she insists.

"No one has the right to bid you lie. Your lying is a peril to your soul, and no one has the right to jeopardise your soul."

"And I have told such heaps of lies!" exclaims the woman in her agony of remorse.

"Resolve to tell no more. That is the way to make amends; that is the way to earn forgiveness."

"Heavens! How good he is!" sighs Tab, now floundering in the slough of her despair. "He ought to kill me, and he seeks to do me good! I'd leap into the fire for such a man as that!"

"My poor woman!" he exhorts her, lifting up her listless hand, "as you would like to hold your head erect, and look good men and women in the face, slough this bad habit of the tongue—just as a viper sheds her worn-out skin."

"Sir Leonard," answers Tab, in a desponding mood, "no man, save only you, has ever seemed to me, that he expected me to tell the truth. What is the good of saying what is true, if no one listens and believes in what you say?"

"We speak the truth, because it is the truth. We do it for our own sake, Mrs. Slokk. That's what we call the truth's sake; but, in fact, it is our own sake that we mean. It is a duty to ourselves."

"I'll tell it all, Sir Leonard—I'm a thief."

"And that was how you came to have this ring?"

"I stole it. I was told to steal it; and I stole it."

"How, and when?"

"Strike me to the earth!"

"You stole this ring from a lady's hand?"

"But, she was dead. How else could I have got the ring from her? I crept beside her in the night. The shed was black. He made me do it, and I tore it from her in the dark, when she was dead."

Pity and anger fill Sir Leonard's eyes by turns, as Tab gasps out her foul and wicked story; but his pity in the long run gains the upper hand; for this poor savage seems to him hardly more responsible for her act than the poacher's dog which breaks through a fence and fetches out a bird from the preserves.

"Hish, my poor woman—hish! Now, mark. There is an angel bending over us, and listening to our words. Who was the owner of this ring?"

She turns aside and knits her hands, as though his pity were more terrible to bear than scorn and wrath.

"Who was the lady of this ring?"

"I cannot speak her name."

"As you have hope for kindness now, and grace hereafter, tell me that lady's name."

"Kill me at once!"

"Tell me the truth—and nothing but the truth."

"I am not fit to live!"

"Was she the lady you accused of having been a planter's mistress, and the mother of his bastard child?"

"I want to die!"

"Out with the truth!"

She darts at the port-side, leaps to the bulwark, clutches at the sheets, steadies her feet, all ready for a spring, and then exclaims:

"*She was!* Now, bid me spring into the flood. You shall not give the word, 'ere I am gone."

Fearing to either speak or stir, lest in her frenzy she may take his moving for a signal, and go over, Leonard keeps his eye fixed steadily on her face. Once, believing him about to speak, she tries to catch and to forestall his words:

"Quick, I am gone."

"Hold on—Mrs. Slokk." The title softens her at once. She looks him in the face. "Come down—I say, come down!"

On seeing him so calm and firm, she wavers in her purpose, drops her arm, and lets the baronet assist her down. He brings her to the centre of the deck. She looks at him again with her admiring eyes, and with a sudden motion flings herself prostrate at his feet.

CHAPTER VIII.

Repentance.

"LIVE and repent! Live and undo the evil you have done!" These phrases ring in Tab's ears, and quiver on her lips as she tosses in her berth all night.

The gale still drives them on, whistling in the sheets and howling along the sails. Cox has put out the fire, and stopped the screws, for they are scudding with their canvas all in use, and running bravely before the wind, the same nor-easter lashing them along at twelve or thirteen knots an hour. Tab listens; but the fiends outside are nothing to the fiends within. A change has come to her. By lights unknown to her, and not supplied by any of her Obi men, she has begun to see that life is not quite all a lie; and that the better things of life—as good words, true acts, and kindly looks—are all connected with the truth. And truth, she sees, is not the white man's virtue. Simon is as false as she; as false as any coloured slave.

How strange, that she has never thought of that before! There is a gap as wide between Sir Leonard and Simon, as between Lady Lyle and herself. Diana never deigned to lie. Tab used to think it was her pride, because her skin was fair. Now she begins to understand. It was her self-respect, and not her pride. A fine thing that—being proud of doing right! That used to be Diana's way. If she (Tab Crump) had only known then, as she knows now, that Diana was Senator Randolph's lawful child, she could have liked her very much. She was a good child, and a brave woman. Even for the sake of Simon, Tab thinks she would not have sacrificed that girl. If she could only see that girl again!

Live and repent! How do folks repent? Live, and undo the evil you have done! How do they set about undoing the evil they have done? All night Tab asks these questions of herself, and all night long the outer demons of the air and sea reply to her in yells and shrieks.

Deep in the night she crawls on deck and peers into the gloom. Dark figures, wrapt in storm-capes, flit about, uneasy, and with growling sounds. A voice cries, "For'ard! light!" in a commanding tone. She knows that voice, and slinks back to her berth, saying timidly to herself, "All safe, then; he's a match for them. They won't scare him, with all their yells and howls."

The yacht is fairly in mid-ocean, heading for Sandy Hook. What Leonard has now learnt, intensifies his yearning to be in Richmond, in the office of Jecks and Co., the family lawyers. He is satisfied that Senator Randolph was a married man, and thinks the family lawyers must have been acquainted with that fact of facts. Why, then, do they deny all knowledge of those papers which were mentioned to General Cridge by Lady Lyle? Some mystery of iniquity may lie behind their silence. But before he reaches Sandy Hook, and sends to Caleb C. Clamm, he has much to say and perhaps to do. This dusky woman may be got to let out more. She knows that Lady Lyle was born in honour. She becomes a witness in his cause. He can depend on her, unless her husband gains the upper hand once more. Does Simon also know? If so, can he be made a witness too? A craven, he may be induced by fear to speak the truth, even as he is driven by fear into the opposite course. That hint about New York was a decided hit. And then he wonders whether Tab, like Simon, can be scared by threats of landing in New York? He'll try her by-and-by.

Tab is on deck when he comes up. She has been helping in the galley, but her nerves are too much strained for her to keep her feet, much less to

polish pots and pans. She sits apart, moody and penitent; wondering how folks begin to undo the evil they have done. The only ghost of an idea that occurs to her is that of her Obi superstition—cutting her throat, or jumping into the sea.

“Why did you steal that lady’s ring?”

Leonard is standing in front of her as he puts this question, in a voice that no more brooks evasion or denial than the question of a judge in court.

“He wanted it,” she answers.

“He? Your husband?”

“Simon Slokk; he was not then my husband.”

“For what purpose could he want that lady’s ring?”

“He never told me, but I guessed it was the gold. It is a heavy hoop.”

“Did you afterwards find his reasons out?”

“Not till we came to Castle Lyle.”

“So late as that! Not thirty days ago?”

“He never tells me things till he is forced, in order to prevent mistakes.”

“And when he came to Castle Lyle, he told you why he bade you steal that lady’s wedding-ring ten years ago!”

“He had to tell me, then, because he could not do without my help. He was afraid of being seen by Lady Lyle.”

“Why so?”

“I can’t tell why. He was though, in a regular stew and funk, lest Lady Lyle should see him. If he had committed murder, and she had seen him do it, he could not have shown more dread of Lady Lyle.”

Leonard holds on and thinks. There’s something more than common in this fear. Why should that fellow dread the eyes of Lady Lyle? An old and

faint suspicion as to the appearance of Black Knob that day returns on him in force. Can this bad man have been concerned in Senator Randolph's death? That some one hurled a stone that morning, as he cantered past Black Knob, Sir Leonard never felt a doubt. And if at him, why not at Randolph? He was but a stranger in the land, with not a man about to wish him ill, and yet—but stay, there was a man who wished him ill. There was the overseer. If Simon hurled that stone at him, he may have flung the stone which struck the Senator's horse; and some chance word may have induced him to believe that his villainy had been seen by Lady Lyle. That theory would square with many of the facts now known to him.

Leonard harks back on Tab, regarding her with more than pity; for, on seeing her better qualities come out day by day, he recollects that she was Colonel Randolph's child; disowned, discarded, illegitimate; but still, she was that gallant soldier's child.

"You've done at last with telling lies?"

"Sir Leonard, I will never lie to you again."

"To no one, Mrs. Slokk?"

"Yes; to no one."

"Now, when your husband told you why he bade you steal that lady's ring, what was the reason given?"

"That Di, her piccaninny, might possess no part of the evidence which proved her free condition and her honourable birth."

"No part! then there was other evidence beyond this ring?"

"Yes; family papers."

"And he wished to have the ring because he

already had those papers? That was why he bade you steal the ring from the dead hand?"

"You know it all, Sir Leonard!"

"Yes; I know it all. Now, Mrs. Slokk, I mean to have those papers, as I have this ring. They are my property, as agent for my wife. Repent; undo the evil you have done!"

"He is my husband. I have parted from him; but I cannot do him harm."

"To tell the truth may do him good. Are you aware that we are heading for New York?"

"Heaven help me, no! New York? Have pity on him, sir! You will not give him up. You will not carry him ashore?"

"That will depend on what we find. As soon as I have seen the banker, Caleb Clamm——"

"Don't let them take him! They will bury him in the Tombs. He'll never see the light of day again."

"Those papers, Mrs. Slokk! Where are those papers, Mrs. Slokk?"

"Spare him, and you shall have them. Let me speak with him a moment."

"Yes, you shall; but in my presence. I will go with you below."

CHAPTER IX.

Restitution.

JOE is standing at the door of Simon's berth, endeavouring, but without success, to rouse the abject creature by a threat, delivered as a chorus, to put his own money on the bob-tail nag, and by a challenge to his moaning victim to bet something on the bay. The abject creature only snorts and kicks, to which the singer is replying by a roll of Du-dahs, when Sir Leonard and Tab step down. Joe moves aside, and Tab pushes past him into the berth.

"S . . . imon," she is beginning her message, when her husband, catching the familiar hiss, and unaware of Sir Leonard's presence in the doorway, lunges out his left heel, and only just misses dealing her a savage blow.

"This beast deserves no quarter," says the baronet, in his impatience. "Stand aside; I'll pay him off old scores."

"For my sake, spare him, sir. He is a white man; he's not used to blows; and he was drunk when he drew that knife on you in the negro-yard."

"And when he made that charge of stabbing?"

"He believed that you were gone, and he would never see your face again."

"Well, woman, speak to him; have done with him. If he knows anything about those Randolph papers, let him speak. Where are they lodged?"

"S . . . imon," she entreats her husband, who is now pulled up a little, his head leaning heavily against the bunk, his eyes staring in a fixed and fish-like im-

becility at the young baronet. "Give him those papers, Simon; give them up at once."

Leonard pricks up his ears. At once! She said at once! Why, then, this lump of earth must have these family papers on his person?

"Stand aside, my good woman—stand aside!" He speaks with an imperial haste.

"Don't kill him sir! He is a white man!"

Simon's dull brain is quickening with the sense of danger. On the western plains one sometimes sees a prairie dog lying helpless, fascinated, half a yard or so in front of a rattle-snake. The snake rears up his head, conscious of his power to dart and crush that helpless prairie dog. Melting in the ecstasy of fear, that prairie dog creeps on a step or two towards his foe, inviting him, as it were, to strike, and giving himself up to death. Simon, in front of the young baronet, is like that fascinated prairie dog in front of the rattle-snake.

"I gife 'em up! I gife 'em up!"

"Quick, man, with thy work!"

"No gife me up to Clamm?" the rascal whines.

"The papers—quick!"

"No gife me up to Lady Lyle?"

"Quick, man, or I'll unseam thee with my knife!"

Simon unfastens his coat and underclothes, unclasps a belt, and from an inner pocket of that belt takes out a leather case.

"Dere ish all papers. I hef gife dem up. You vitness dat I gife dem up of my free vill, all of my own free vill. I hope you shtand my friend?"

"Yes, S . . . imon; he will stand our friend," Tab soothes her husband.

"I never do it, never! I no murder him! It vas one accident! Dat shtone roll down! I never kill him—no!"

Half listening to these explanations and confessions of the guilty wretch—whose hands seem stained with many sorts of crime—Leonard unties the leathern case, in which he finds three scraps of paper, carefully folded up, and labelled on the outer side:—

"1. Slokk and Tab."

"2. Astor and Clamm."

"3. Senator Randolph."

With quivering fingers he unfolds the papers marked Senator Randolph, and with quick and beaming eye runs through the contents more than once.

"Heavens! here is evidence enough to satisfy a judge!"

Holding the papers up aloft, Sir Leonard looks at Tab, and asks, "Were these the reasons why he feared the eyes of Lady Lyle?"

"They were, Sir Leonard. He believed she was a witness of his crime. The next day after her father's death she charged him, in the presence of my brother Pomp, and a second slave named Paul, with murder."

"Di!"

"She was alone—stunned, orphaned, outraged, sick; but she stood up before him, and denounced him as a murderer and rifler of the dead."

"My own brave Di!"

"And so he thought she must have seen him hurl the stone, and steal the papers."

"Hum! How that explains things."

Having slaked his burning thirst, Sir Leonard puts the papers in his bosom and unfolds the documents labelled Slokk and Tab, and Astor and Clamm.

The first is a certificate of the marriage of Simon Slokk, of Viper Flat, to Tabitha Crump, of Riverside. Leonard hands it to the woman with a smile:

"Fresh evidence of your right to bear the name of Mrs. Slokk."

The next paper is a cancelled bill, drawn by Astor & Co. on Caleb C. Clamm for ten thousand dollars.

"What is this paper?" he demands of Tab. "Are you acquainted with this document, Mrs. Slokk?"

"That is our trouble in New York, Sir Leonard," she confesses, in a broken voice. "That is the reason we're afraid of Clamm."

"Why so?"

"It is a forgery."

"A forgery! This bill is drawn by Astor and Co. on Caleb C. Clamm."

"It's Simon's masterpiece—what he used to call his masterpiece—a forgery of a forgery!"

Caleb Clamm, as Leonard soon gathers, was a luckless man of business. Early in his career he was accused of forgery, and sentenced to imprisonment for life. After seven years passed in the Tombs, a doubt arose about the evidence; and on petition to the government at Albany, he was released under bonds to appear on any future call. A few months after he returned to business, Simon waited on him in Wall Street, and produced this bill, declaring it to be a forgery by Clamm on Astor & Co. Clamm turned white; he understood his visitor. Though he had never seen that bill before, he was aware that fresh accusation would cause his instant arrest and re-committal to the Tombs. So, putting off all shilly-shally, Clamm inquired his visitor's terms. Simon proposed to open

an account; and all went well with him till General Cridge's arrival in New York.

"This charge of forgery, extortion, and conspiracy," thinks Leonard, "must be that case in which his Excellency was concerned." Then looking at the sprawling villain, he inquires in a stern voice, "This is your forgery, Simon Slokk?"

"Dat ish my forgery," Simon whines and slobbers, "but I no murder him!"

"Murder whom?"

"Shenator."

The old suspicions are confirmed. This scoundrel was the demon of Black Knob. Leonard has hardly any doubt that Simon hurled the stone which struck the Senator's horse, and thereby caused the Senator's death.

"Why did you murder Senator Randolph?"

"I no murder him. I rob him—I no murder him!"

Satisfied that Simon was guilty of the robbery, and suspecting him of the murder, Leonard leaves him on the floor, and goes into his cabin to peruse and copy the papers labelled Senator Randolph. They are four in number.

1. A bill of sale by John Randolph, of Riverside, to Edward Wingfield, of Orange Gap, of the slave, Tabitha Crump, otherwise known as Contessa Tab, with an acknowledgment of the receipt of twelve hundred dollars on delivery of the said slave.

2. A letter of freedom granted by Edward Wingfield, of Orange Gap, to the coloured woman, Tabitha Crump.

3. A certificate of the marriage of Frank Randolph, of Riverside, to Diana, only daughter of Edward Wingfield, of Orange Gap.

4. A certificate of the baptism of Diana, daughter of Frank Randolph and Diana, his wife.

"Happy, happy lines!" Sir Leonard whispers, with a grateful sense of safety, to his beating heart. "Di, how thy eyes will glisten, and thy pulse will bound!"

He runs once more from first to last through these convincing and conclusive documents.

"Thy face will brim with a new glory, Di!"

Then, with a flash of thought, he gathers up the papers in his hand, never to part from them again till he can place them in her hands. He leaps on deck and calls for his sailing-master, Cox.

"Yes, Sir," replies that sturdy sea-dog.

"Up, helm! About—ship! Our voyage is ended, Cox. Put back to land."

"To England, Sir?"

"Aye. Everything is changed. We must return at our best speed. About, and let us face our port."

The vessel, answering to her helm, swings round, but the wind is raging from the nor-east.

"Steam on," cries Leonard; "head to the wind."

The *Foam* is now set on.

How much the inner shapes the outer life, the baronet thinks, as he looks forward to the black and driving clouds. Just now that gale appeared to him a blessed spirit, for it was hurrying him towards New York, on his way to Richmond! Now it is a buffeting demon, for it hinders his return to Land's End, on his way to Castle Lyle!

"Dirty in front," growls Cox, as a black cloud gathers hastily, a flash of fire leaps out, and a deluge rattles down.

"Pull down thy cap, and look it in the teeth. On, man, through storm and fire, to Lady Lyle!"

CHAPTER X.

Exit.

FIVE or six days they head on in the teeth of wind and rain, using their canvas when they dare, and keeping what they can of their reserves in coal. Every one save Simon lends a hand in helping on the yacht.

For some days after his confession of the forgery and theft, Simon mopes on his coil of ropes and chains, refusing to go below, and for the greater part refusing to eat. He whines for drink—schnapps, schnapps, for ever schnapps. Leonard has given his purser an imperative order not to pass him out a single dram.

When the wind stings sharp, and the rain smites hard, the drunkard shivers on his coil, and staggers to his feet. No one has time for watching him save Tab, who tries to get him under cover, but her cares to do him good are savagely repulsed. He leans over the bulwark, peering with his fish-like eyes into the black and scurrying waters, wondering, with an aimless, idiotic wonder, whether they are racing for New York or Castle Lyle. Since his flask was taken from him, nearly all his small remains of manliness seem lost. A little spite alone is left, which finds its vent in an occasional oath and lunge at Tab.

Sense, oversight, memory, all have left him. Like a sick dog, he whines and howls; yet if any one speaks to him he shrinks and shakes. He seems to have lost the use of words. He has a muddled notion that the yacht is steering for New York; yet he is under the impression that the first person he will see

on landing will be Lady Lyle—come to denounce him once again, with that commanding air and with that lofty voice which he remembers, as a murderer and rifler of the dead!

Shuddering at his coil of rope, and thinking that the hangman must be nigh, he turns again to these black and scudding waves, and wonders whether they would cover him from the vengeance of that injured lady; but the roar and grind of the tumultuous waters frighten him almost as much as the avenging phantom of Lady Lyle. Again, he cowers among his ropes and chains.

Deep in the second watch, the air being black with mist, and the sea rolling heavily, Sir Leonard, standing on the bridge, cries suddenly, in a clear and arousing voice:

“Look out; port side! A sail! Hold, hard!”

These words have hardly raked the yacht, causing the men to clutch at sheet and bulk-head, ere a brigantine leaps on them from the clouds; huge, vaporous, sudden, like a bird with multiplied and outstretched wings, all flapping, buffeting above their heads.

A cry is heard. Spars mix with spars, and sails with sails, in angry cut and thrust. A scrape—as of a plank stove in; a snap—as of a yard-arm gone: a shake and rustle of the sheets and shroud—and the whole thing is over; the mysterious brigantine melting back into the darkness like a great black ghost.

“An ugly scratch!” growls Cox, as soon as they are clear.

“That was a jerk!” adds Leonard; “we were lifted up, rolled over on the starboard beam. The wonder is that we were not all spilt out.”

"The lubbers bore no light," comments the old sea-dog with a frown of anger.

"Do you think they are hurt, Cox?"

"Well, I hope so. I am not ill-natured, but I hope they're scratched, sir."

"Heaven have mercy on them!"

When daylight comes, all hands are piped on deck. Simon is missing. Leonard looks at Tab. The widow puts her face into her palms, and sobs.

BOOK XII.

MIDSUMMER DAY.

PERIOD, 1870.

CHAPTER I.

The School.

A CRY of boys and girls at play, broken by tap of drum and bar of song, comes up from the quaint old garden under Rupert's tower, causing a pale and eager face to turn from a heap of letters, placards, and reports, and listen to the happy riot. Smiles illumine that wan face, as the tap of a toy drum is heard above the glee and noise.

"Dear Frank! And he is seven years old to-day."

It is Friday, twenty-fourth of June, and Frank, born on the festival of St. John the Baptist, is now a gentleman of seven, aware of all his years and rights. Children from the village school have been invited to the grounds, to swing and romp, eat cake and fruit, and make a holiday of the event. And here they are, racing and singing up and down, diving into the vaults under Rupert's tower, and chasing moths among the ashlar overthrown by Cromwell's guns.

These little ones are the sons and daughters of humble folk; small farmers, fish-wives, grocers, and the

like; with here and there a more pretentious fry, the boy or girl of some druggist, land-agent, or solicitor. They are schoolmates, one and all; fellows on the same benches of a school which was taken in hand only a few weeks ago by Lady Lyle.

When Diana learned the truth from his Excellency, General Cridge, about her husband's views and dealings in the separation, she was certain he would come to her again. She could not say how long he might be absent; for the Richmond lawyer was an angry, obstinate man; but she was confident that Leonard would return as soon as he had done his work; bringing with him the evidence of her claim as Senator Randolph's child. His toil was in her service. How was she to recompense such travail?

By an extra share of love? By a more tender and devoted care? By a more reverent waiting on his mood, effacing her own separate life, and growing more and more at one with him?

In earlier days, when the first dawning of this trouble had come to her, she tried this course and found it very sweet. What loving woman does not find it sweet to sit down meekly on her couch, and feel a strong arm winding round her waist, seducing her to lean her head in peace, unvexed by any personal strain of thought? What female, kissing and caressing, can resist the chance of yielding up the reins to stronger hands, freeing herself from all the fret of life, and from the friction of all earthly things? It is so nice to feel that some one is taking care of you; so nice to feel that you have not to answer for what is either done or left undone.

Diana tried this course in her early married life; but she was never sure of her success. She gave up

all to Leonard; using herself towards him in a lowly, loving, childlike spirit; yet the husband whom she strove to make a tyrant, only learnt to be her slave. She tested him in little things; and saw him yield to her when she had secretly desired him to be firm. His softness towards her touched the chords of pride. She felt no joy in seeing him yield so often and so much. On other sides, as she perceived, he urged and swayed his equals in age and sex, and she began to fear that there was something wrong in her—a certain babyness, that induced him to regard and humour her as a child. The query stood before her thus—Was Leonard's softness with her prompted by the fact that he thought her weak, not that he thought her in the right?

A sadder and maturer precept came to her from this mental strife. Slowly, but surely, she began to feel that harmony in wedded love is hardly to be gained by sinking the woman's nature in the man's. Both natures are required. It is a girlish fancy to suppose that love is all, and that the very heavens may be flung away for love. It is the woman's part to soar and not to sink.

Diana has now been trained to higher things than the indulgence of a purely selfish love. When General Cridge let in that ray of light—so new to her, so sure in promise to her heart—the words which sprang unsought to her excited lips were: "We will get to work."

She meant that in their situation she had other things to do than sit and mope, brooding on past mishaps, and feeding her fancy with images of him, as he would look when he came back, on putting his arm about her waist, and hugging her to his heart. She

had to soar and not to sink. Her first thought was to make herself less unworthy of such a man. And how was she to do it? By her thought for others; by setting down to such duties, outside her own emotions, as might be lying neglected at her feet. Were any such duties to be found? Yea, at her door. Out, from her park-gates, down to the little port, were scattered many cottages, of which the tenants were mostly poor, and the little folks born in them were left to grow up ignorant of the simplest things. Not one in ten could read a line; not one in twenty could sign his name. Such things were but too common throughout rural England seven or eight years ago; nowhere so common as in the shadow of feudal castles, in the ownership of feudal lords.

A consumptive rector, who had come to Port Lyle a little before Sir Warren's death, had set his heart on building a school in this neglected place; but the old baronet, a practical and public man, hating moonshine, whether it gleamed in a Sheffield sword-grinder or an Oxford text-spinner, laughed at the scheme, and set his teeth against such revolutionary cant.

When Leonard brought his young bride to Castle Lyle for their brief honeymoon, the rector tried his luck again about that project for a village school. Sir Leonard and Lady Lyle saw no one but himself and the young doctor, their cousin, so that he had every chance of putting things before them in a proper light. Diana took the project up; Leonard gave the money; and the management was left in the rector's hands.

While the school was rising from the ground, the rector was drooping to his rest. Before the roof was fairly on, he drove the village lads and lasses into

school. The parents, blind to the good he meant to do, resented his too eager tone, and when the enemy overtook him at his desk, they not unwillingly saw the school shut up.

More than once, since her return from yachting, Lady Lyle had spoken about that school to Grace, but Grace lived farther off, and she had no such feeling for poor people as her friend. Not that the Georgian lady is wanting in the proper female sympathies. In truth, no lady is richer in the patented forms of pity for the poor as poor; and no woman in Yorkshire would more readily adorn her life with all allowable good works. But Lady Lyle regards them from another stage. Her pity is not given to the poor as poor, because pity, like a low voice, is becoming in a lady. She is kind to them because they are men and women, and appear to be neglected by the world. Nothing was settled by her talk with Grace, but a plan for a revival of the rector's scheme about the school was often present to Diana's mind.

When she cried out to Cridge, "We'll get to work," she thought of that empty school, and those neglected children on the roads and in the alleys of Port Lyle. Sunset of the same day found her at the building, giving orders to have the floors scrubbed, the windows cleaned, the desks set right, the maps nailed up; while messengers were running from cottage to cottage with news that the school would be opened by Lady Lyle next day at ten o'clock, and that all the children of her tenants were expected to attend.

At ten o'clock next morning, Lady Lyle and Frank were down from the Castle. Frank was the first to have his name inscribed, and, as he knew his drill already, he was appointed captain of the school. Until

a certified mistress could be got from York, Diana took the teaching on herself, and after a self-sufficing damsel came to hand, she began to make the school-room cheerier by drawing figures and landscapes on the wall.

These are the boys and girls now playing in the Castle garden, keeping up Frank's birthday under the eyes of Lady Lyle.

CHAPTER II.

Schoolmates.

"FALL in!" cries Bessie; "fall in, boys and girls!"

"Fall in!" repeats the captain, with a rat-tat on his drum.

A crow of small fry sallies up, laughing and shouting in delight. Frank puts his drum down rather wistfully, and lays his hand on the hilt of a wooden sword.

"Fall in, first squad. Front rank, boys; rear rank, girls. Size!"

One little chap stands up, too small to range with the other lads.

"Chin up! Is that you, little Jemie? Stand out; you're too small for drill. Stand out, and have a swing."

Jemie stands out with a sad face, and then one sees that he is lame, and that his withered leg is the cause of his looking so very small a boy.

"Dear Frank!" Diana says to her beating heart. "Yes, that was nice in him not to remind the boy that he is lame. These urchins call him Limping

Jemie. Frank is too good for that. How like his father!"

Jemie stands shyly on one side. He does not care to swing. He wants to see the boys and girls at drill. That's what he would like to do himself, and what he would like to do himself, he likes more than anything else to watch.

Bessie assists in forming squad. Tripping into the rear, she helps in sizing the little girls and getting them to hold their tongues, and stand erect and silent like the boys.

"Attention!" shouts Frank; and the whole squad begins to stretch and stiffen up. "Eyes right, dress!" and the squad dresses up. "Eyes front."

Every one stands in order, facing to the front, with ears expecting the word of command.

"By your right—quick, march!" The whole body moves forward. "Left wheel. Halt!"

"Well done!" Diana, coming out a little way on the stone balcony, cannot help crying to the squad. Frank is putting up his sword. As soon as the squad began to march, the little lame boy hung down his head and cried, not loudly, yet with bitter tears and sobs. Frank noticed him, and halted his company. Going up to the child, who is a few months younger than himself, he whispers, "Don't cry, Jemie. If you won't cry, I'll make your sister Poll a corporal."

"Will you, though?" starts the little lame boy, delighted with this prospect of having some martial glory in his family.

"Yes, Jemie; and look here, you shall beat my drum. Here, let me put the strap round your neck. Now, come along; we'll march and you shall drum."

Diana, catching at her breath, sighs to herself,

"How like his father!" and her heart is very glad; for has she not, by her attendance in the school, been helping in the work of which this manliness in her darling is the fruit? A second lady joins Diana on the balcony, and a flutter of white garments shows you that their arms are winding round each other.

"Grace, how well this schooling of the children works! Look at these merry boys and girls; for one day in their lives they shall be free from care."

"You'll fill their heads with nonsense, dearest dear, and make them cry to have the moon."

"No, Grace. When the poor are huffed, it is not because they have been happy for a day, but because they have been happy only for a day. They'll want the moon, you think? I hope so, and a good deal more. They ought to want the very heavens, and try to get at them. I should deem my poorest tenant a mean-hearted fellow if he were not hungering for a higher lot. That soaring temper is the wing that bears us to the skies."

"Well, dearest dear, I hope your kindness will not do them harm."

"Believe me, Grace, a charm will fall on these poor things in many an after time from this day's sport. And then how good it is for Frank!"

"I have my fears and fancies. Look, now, at that Limping Jemie. That's Frank's friend and chum."

"Dear Grace!"

"Well, dearest dear, when Frank goes to Eton, you'll hardly think of sending Limping Jemie as his comrade."

"No, I am not so foolish, Grace. Frank's life will move on other planes than theirs; but when he is a

man I wish him to remember he was once a child. He'll find, too soon, that he is born to wealth and rank. I want my son to feel, when he grows up, towards each of these boys, for they are likely to be his servants and his tenants, as his father feels towards Joe—that although he eats our bread, he is a man. Come, Grace, let us go down and see what can be seen. My angel whispers me he will be back to-night."

And they descend into the garden, and, kissing Frank on their way, run up the knoll on which the flag-staff stands. For a time they search the waste of rolling water—north, east, south, but chiefly towards the south, where they had seen the last white sail dip down beyond the rim. Some hulls are seen far out, and trending from the port; no shape is visible that reminds Diana of the *Foam*.

While the two ladies at the flag-staff strain their sight, as they would seize in their mind's grip some image of a thing that is to come, but which has not become as yet a part of sense, Bessie is calling in her troops of heroes and Amazons, who come marching on the private garden under Rupert's tower with quick and silent tread, and the grave faces which all men and boys associate with drill.

"Halt!" the captain cries; the company halts.

"Now, then," says Bessie, "let us sing our little song for Lady Lyle, and then we shall go in to cake and tea."

The company forms, clears its throat, and listens for the keynote. With a clap of her hands, the village coquette begins:

"Good night, dear love, good night."

Diana turns her face away, yet catches in each word and note. Her mother's verse, her mother's music! It is very hard on her at times, that thought of her dear mother, with her love, her beauty, and her genius, lying in that servile trench, with that false writing on the stone above her head! How well she recollects the evening when she sang that verse in Leonard's presence! Will he ever hear that evensong again?

How prettily those children sing!

CHAPTER III.

Looking in and out.

A MESSENGER comes in from the Lyle Committee, sitting at the Lyle Arms, with Sheriff Boggs' compliments to her ladyship, and a copy of the three o'clock returns, made up from nearly all the polling-booths. "The three o'clock returns, Grace! In an hour the polls will all be closed, and we shall know our fate."

"Our fortune, dearest dear?" her friend suggests.

"Yes, Grace, our fate and fortune all in one. Sir Leonard will be in. Look at these lists: here are the totals. Three o'clock, majority of Lord St. Leger over the highest Radical, twelve hundred and twenty-three; of Sir Leonard Lyle over the highest Radical, fifteen hundred and eighty-nine!"

"Sir Leonard is the head?"

"Three hundred votes above Lord St. Leger!"

"It is all your doing, dearest dear. You know it's all your doing, dearest dear."

"And not a sail in sight!" Diana answers; "not so much as a phantom ship."

"What with your new school, and your great picture, and this county contest, I'm astonished at your state of health. You've been at all their meetings, all their sermons—all their charities."

"Worse, dear Grace; at all their dinners, dances, picnics."

"You've received fifty deputations, made a hundred speeches, written five hundred letters. It does one good to see you look so bright!"

"There is no kindler of the eye like love, no bracer of the nerves like work."

"You work so much and love so deeply!"

"I have learned to feel that there is no such magic in the world as lies in these great precepts—Work and Love. If pain and shame should ever press thee hard, as they may chance to do, in spite of all thy innocence and virtue, meet them with honest work and faithful love. Heaven makes us noble, and commits us each to His own kingship. It is ours to either soar or sink. That is our freedom, Grace. When we fall back, doing what we should not do, leaving undone the thing we should do, Heaven puts us through the fire. If we have any of the nobler virtues left, she ransoms us through work and reconciles through love."

"Where have you read that, dearest dear?"

"In Leonard's heart; and somewhat in my own."

"I never heard him talk like that."

"No, Grace; he lives his life. I read him in his acts."

"You make one feel quite noble, dearest dear. I'll go and see that those children get their cake."

As Grace trips off in the direction of Rupert's tower, Diana beckons Bessie, who comes up, a little tardily. She has been crying, and is anxious that her lady should not see the traces of her tears.

"I want thy eyes. Why, Bessie, they are red!"

"Forgive me, madam; but I can't help thinking now and then of Joe."

"I like you for it, Bessie. Come with me. I want you at the flag-staff. I've an instinct, Bessie, that the *Foam* is near."

"And Joe all safe on board?"

"Yes, Joe all safe on board. Come, now."

They are hardly up the slope before Grough appears in the shrubberies leading from the stable-yard by which he has chosen to approach the house; having engaged a bed and put up his traps at the Lyle Arms, in order to be independent of the lady to whom he may have to make himself unpleasant before the day is over. It is more than half-past three by the belfry clock, and there is neither yacht nor baronet yet in sight. At four o'clock, according to his instructions, he is authorized to act. Boggs is down at the Lyle Arms with other gentlemen of the Committee; and the Duke, as Grough has learnt, is in the neighbourhood with the American minister, and is likely to arrive as soon as the several polls are known.

These things he has foreseen; therefore, he came from London by the morning train. For his part, Grough, being a philosopher, expects neither yacht nor baronet. Leonard has gone after wild geese. It will be months—and may be years—before he finds that such a chase is hardly worth the steam. It is not a pleasant task Grough has before him. Some men wouldn't like it. He's not certain that he likes it; but

he's got the thing to do; and if he is to do his duty to Sir Leonard, he must brace his sinews by the tonic of abuse. The worst of such a tonic is, that he has ceased to enjoy abusing Lady Lyle. That woman may have been a bastard and a slave, but, in his opinion, she's a lady now, if there is any lady left alive.

"There's Mr. Grough arrived," says Lady Lyle to Bessie, as they turn from the look-out, seeing nothing in the shape of sail or smoke; "let us go down to him; he is an old man; let us pay him due respect."

So they trip down to him; and Lady Lyle puts out her hand. Grough holds aloof, as Diogenes might have held aloof from Pallas, pretending not to see her proffered courtesy. Her offer is a grace on which the attorney has no right to count,—so that his rudeness strikes her painfully, as an insult. Grough is her enemy, she fears, and must be dealt with on the ground he chooses to take up. But she will try him first again.

"You are my husband's friend, as well as man of business?"

"Madam, I have known him from a boy. He was the handsomest and the gentlest boy alive; brave as a hero, tender as a girl!"

"You knew and loved him?"

"As a father loves his son."

"Give me your hand. You loved him? Then you are my friend."

But Grough is on his guard against her. If he yields to his emotions, he is lost. He must be stoical and stern.

"My lady, I'm your servant; and I know my place. You are Lady Lyle; I am Sir Leonard's man of business; and I have a duty to discharge. The time is

over half-past three. At four o'clock, Sir Leonard not being here to answer for himself, I have a message for the Duke."

Diana guesses at this message to his Grace. A version of the story of her separation, put by Leonard in some form to screen her from blame and take all censure on himself.

"Not yet!" she pleads with the philosopher; "you need not see his Grace—as yet. You are fatigued. Come in, and rest. Give me an hour; I only ask an hour!"

"Ugh!" growls the stoic, looking up at the belfry clock; "it's now thirty-five minutes past three; I'll wait till four o'clock. At four, my duty forces me to seek the Duke."

CHAPTER IV.

Lost Witnesses.

AN hour,—nay, not an hour, and then the scandal must have wings! Diana sinks on the ottoman in her room, as this idea flashes through her brain.

This is the hardest trial she has had to face; for here, she has to deal with cold and cynical people, not with persons who are swayed by love and pride. At four o'clock, if Leonard is still absent, his solicitor has orders to explain things to the Duke. No doubt, he has a message for the county also. He will speak to Boggs—that fearful Sheriff Boggs! At what he is about to utter, she can only guess. But he is Leonard's servant, carrying out a master's orders. He will hint, she has no doubt, that Leonard has been much to

blame; assert that Leonard has done something wrong; which drove him to leave England, and try to make the county look on her as on a deeply-injured woman. That is what she thinks the man of business has come down to do.

But, on her side, she is resolved that no such injury to Leonard shall be done. She will not play that part of crowned and suffering saint; nor shall her husband suffer by her silence in his name and fame. If any lie is told, however white, she'll meet it with the black and bitter truth.

This course, she fancies, will be the best for all. When Leonard learns that everything is known, his absence will have lost its motive. He will then come back to Frank, and by his coming set her free. For her part, she can go to Prue. There is a nest for her, she knows, in Cataract House, where she can paint, and live again her girlish life. No taint in her ancestral blood can shake the love of Prue and Uncle John.

Diana, sitting in her boudoir, is revolving matters in her mind, when General Cridge arrives.

"O, Uncle John! I was thinking of you this very instant."

"My child, I was thinking of you this very instant."

"Yes, I knew that, Uncle John."

"How so, Diana?"

"By myself. When you begin to think of me, I also, like a good child, think of you."

"Then that is rather often."

"Every day, and every hour in every day. You have not come alone?"

"The Duke is here. But he has driven to the Committee-rooms first. He is a party man, and wants

to hear the news. He says there's no offence in asking for the polls."

"I'm very glad you came to me. I want you, Uncle John. I'm very often wanting you, Uncle John."

"Trust me, my child. What's in your mind? Are things going wrong in the school? Are the models for your picture vexing you? That the election is all right, I know. What is it?"

"None of those things, Uncle John. I have been dreaming of the Cataracts."

"You want to see the Falls once more?"

"I have begun to think so lately, Uncle John. You think they'd spare me a corner in Quiet Home?"

"In Cataract House?"

"I cannot learn to call that paradise Cataract House."

"Diana, Cataract House is yours; as my adopted child, and by my will."

Diana leaps into the old man's arms, and leaning her cheek against his face, she purrs and whispers:—

"Uncle John, if I accept this house, it is to hold it in the name, and for the benefit, of Prue and Sam. No girl ever had a sister and a brother like Prue and Sam. We'll live together as we used to do, and Sam shall whistle all day long. Now, tell me. Is there news of Marian Grey?"

"There is, my child."

"And by your tone, bad news?"

"The worst. Our witness is no longer living. She was murdered two years since in one of the Kickapoo raids from Mexico."

"Poor Marian Grey!"

"Our hope from her is dashed."

"And Lovett? Is there news of him from Asia?"

"None. My correspondent in St. Petersburg found traces of a Lovett, an American officer in the Russian service. Years ago he vanished, and his name has long been off the lists. He went to Orenburg, and left that place with forty Kozaks to relieve a post. He rode into the desert and was lost. Our minister in Russia thinks he must be dead."

"Then, all our witnesses are gone!"

"No evidence remains, my child."

"Except the papers, Uncle John? You mean, outside those papers, Uncle John?"

"My child!—Well—yes; I mean outside those papers."

"Have you tried again with Jecks?"

"Yes, Jecks has done the hunting after Marian Grey. I've never known such work done better; for he caught the trail at once, and followed the poor lady through a dozen states, until he found her scalpless in a Kickapoo's clutch."

"He still denies all knowledge of my father's visit to his room that day?"

"No; there he has amended his reply to your inquiry. Formerly, he denied that Senator Randolph called at his offices. Now, he admits the call. A negro, in his service, recollects the Senator dropping in; reading some private prayers; and at last going out with a joke, promising to come again. The negro fixes the date by these facts: the Senator gave him a dollar; he drank too much whisky; he was lodged all night in the Calaboose. Jecks never saw the papers; but the Senator's visit is now proved. Jecks supposes that it was your knowledge of the Senator's intention to call that day, which made you positive about the family documents being deposited in his hands."

"But, Uncle John, consider," she exclaims; "if my father brought those papers back from Richmond, he must have had them in his pocket when he fell!"

"Yes, that is certain."

"Well. You follow me?"

"I think so. You suggest that probably he was robbed?"

"I do."

"And that is likely. Who discovered the dead Senator?"

"I—myself; lying among the stones."

"Was no one near?"

"Yes, Simon Slokk; he was close by."

"Hum!" responds his Excellency quickly; and then, taking a turn, he puts this and that together in regard to what he knows of Simon Slokk.

CHAPTER V.

Uncle John.

SHOULD there happen to be any basis for Diana's dream about her family papers, a conjecture which his Excellency smiles at himself for making, even in the way of argument, it is no stretch of fancy to suppose the corpse was robbed. If that idea were admitted, it is not unlikely that the thief was Simon Slokk.

If Simon robbed the Senator, he may have murdered him as well. Cridge was acquainted with the cave under Black Knob, and with the smuggler's shaft and stair. He knew that Simon hung about the rock and cave. Why may he not have rolled the stones that struck the Senator's horse and caused his death?

Cridge grinds his heel into the ground as he pursues his darkening train of thought. If Simon had his hand in that black deed, he must have been set on by Colonel Randolph. Pressing his teeth, the General adds in audible words, "Aye, it is well that man is dead!"

Diana seems intent on her own thoughts.

Sir Leonard, as the General reckons, ought to have reached New York by this time, but the weather has been rough, and some delay must have taken place. So much the better now. A telegram can be sent to the detective office, putting the chief of that department on his guard. If there be papers, Simon is certain to have kept them; either on his person, or in some safe corner of New York. The chief detective officer will know his haunts and pals. If any papers are secreted on his person, they can be secured. At any price, the documents must be seized, if there be any documents to seize. The General has arrived at these conclusions, when Diana, waking, as it were, from her brown study, startles him by exclaiming,—

"Yes, I have it, Uncle John!"

"You have, Diana?"

"Simon stole those papers; stole them from my father at Black Knob."

"What makes you think so?"

"I remember all at once. A moment, and you'll see my reasons."

"Take your time, Diana."

"You remember seeing a portrait of Sir Leonard in the negro-shed—that portrait which is hanging in the Lady's bower?"

"I do, Diana."

"When the first alarm was given about my father,

I rode towards Black Knob, leaving that sketch on my table in the morning-room. While I lay sick in the negro cabin, it was sent to me from the house. Why? And by whom? There was the puzzle. Afterwards came that letter from my Uncle George, which led to our flight from Riverside. Then I perceived that both the portrait and the letter had been sent to me by Simon Slokk. But why? That was a second and a greater puzzle. He was not my friend, and he was lying under no delusion as to what I thought of him. I had accused him, in the presence of two negro witnesses, of theft and murder. It was wrong, of course, to speak of murder; for I only meant that his brutality had hastened my mother's end: but I was sure about the theft; for as he sat and puffed his smoke, I saw my mother's rings coiled round his little finger. I denounced him to his face. Why, then, had he sent me Leonard's portrait and George's letter? That comes to me like a flash. He was alarmed; my words had frightened him: he was a craven, and my shaft, drawn at a chance, and shot beside the mark, had struck him—stunned him!"

"Tell me how, Diana?"

"That is what I have just now come to see. The man was struck beside my mark, because he lay exposed to an attack beside my mark. You understand? Intent on what had happened in the morning-room and in the negro cabin, I denounced him as a murderer and a rifler of the dead. I meant that he had caused my mother's death, and stolen her jewels after she was dead. He took my meaning on the other side; he fancied I was speaking of my father at Black Knob, and thought I was accusing him of taking life and pillaging the dead."

"Diana, that is likely," is the soldier's comment.
"It is certain, Uncle John. Consider what occurred: he, prowling in the neighbourhood, stumbled on the fallen man. He rifled him. Lifting up his eyes, he saw a mounted woman looking on. That woman was the Senator's daughter. Coming on him suddenly, he could not tell how much she might have seen. Within a few hours, she denounced him, before two witnesses, as a murderer and rifler of the dead. You see? He must have come to the conclusion that she had the power of charging him with the commission of some act—some penal and felonious act—by which his liberty might be abridged, and even his life put in jeopardy. If so, he must have known that he was open to that charge, and guilty of that act."

"My child, you reason like a judge."

"Are you of my opinion, Uncle John?"

"If your whole theory is not a dream, your reading of this mystery about the portrait and the letter may be right."

"Suppose my theory is sound, what is the course for us to take?"

"We'll telegraph to the detective office in New York. We'll have our warrants and our men prepared. An hour after Sir Leonard slips his anchor in the bay, Simon will be a prisoner in the Tombs."

"And my father's papers?"

"Will be in the hands of justice."

"Stay. The hands of justice!"

"You have no objection?"

"No objection, Uncle John! I have a great objection. They are family documents, relating to a private history. They affect my mother. I believe that

when they are examined properly, they will tell an honourable tale; but I have never looked at them with critical and jealous eyes. I only know their contents in a general way. Before a stranger sees those papers, I should like to study them myself. New York detectives, I am told, are shrewd and cunning men, but they are not the persons I should like to make the judges of my mother's married life."

"What would you have? Whoever finds those papers will and must peruse them. How, without perusal, can they know that they have found the documents they seek?"

"Then, Uncle John, I pray that they may fall into no other hands than those of Leonard Lyle."

CHAPTER VI.

Four o'clock.

THE belfry clock strikes four. Diana lifts her eyes. In silence, General Cridge rejects that prayer that her family certificates may fall into Sir Leonard's hands. According to his theory, she is praying for a curse. If there are family papers in existence, he is confident they will tell the story, not as she expects to find it, but in outline as it stands in Colonel Randolph's affidavit. On his own part, he accepts that statement, root and branch: Diana was a slave; her mother was a slave. These facts have been her claims on him from first to last. With Leonard it was otherwise. He would have thought no more about her, after quitting Riverside, had he known she was a base-born slave. Assured in his own mind that when those secrets

come to light, they will confirm the affidavit, Cridge would rather trust them with the New York police than with her husband, Sir Leonard Lyle.

Diana sees that Uncle John is dubious, and his hardness of belief depresses her. While they are each intent on their own phase of thought, Frank gallops in, neighing and curvetting in his favourite part of a wild pony of the desert.

"Now, mamma!"

"Well, what's the matter, Frank?"

"Tea's done; we're coming out."

"Yes; run and play, my boy."

"We want to sing for you, mamma."

"Yes, by-and-by, you shall; now run and play. Here are all your school-mates coming for you."

"They're coming out to you, mamma. They want to sing your song. You taught us, and we want you to hear how we can do it: don't we, Jemie?"

Jemie flushes to his temples, but he only answers with a nod. He is a great man now, and got a drum about his neck; but he can hardly venture to speak in presence of Lady Lyle. Diana calls to Bessie, who adroitly leads the youngsters off, skipping and shouting, towards the vaults under Rupert's tower, in the crannies and passages of which she sets them playing a game of hide-and-seek. Diana glances from the belfry clock to the spiral stair.

"Yes, Uncle John?"

"If it were possible for the documents to fall into Sir Leonard's hands——"

"You think that likely, Uncle John?"

"My child——"

Here Frank huffs back, rather in the dumps, with his eyelids tremulous.

"Where's papa?" he asks, in a pettish tone.

"At sea, Frank; in the yacht."

"Why is he in the yacht when we are not there, too?"

"The doctor ordered him to cruise, you know; he is cruising for his health."

"My birthday, too! What's the good of having a birthday when papa's not here?"

"Now, Frank, your playmates want you."

"I don't want to play."

"Frank, dear!"

"Well, I can't. What's the good of playing when papa's not here?"

"Well, dear, he'll soon come back."

"How soon? To-day?"

"I hope so, Frank. He's due to-day."

"I'll tell you what, mamma. When he comes back, we'll have all the games over again—march, battle-dore, hide-and-seek, kiss in the ring, prison-bars—all again."

"Now, Frank, remember you're a little man, and you must look to your guests."

"But, mind, he comes to-day."

The darling trips away towards Rupert's tower, leaping and bounding to the negro tune of "Du, dah."

The General rises from his bench, watching the bright youngster's movements, till his figure disappears among the shrubs and stones, and then, with a thicker utterance, says he will just step down to the dépôt, and wire a message to New York.

As he is passing from the garden, he encounters Lamber coming with the latest news. Lamber dislikes the Brigadier, for Grace regards him as an enemy of her country, and the lapse of time has hardly cooled

the doctor's Southern fire. Saluting the doctor, General Cridge passes on in silence, the word "Chatterbox" unspoken on his lips.

"Ha, my lady, here we are! I'm glad we've found you in the garden. Such fal-lals going on down there! We have been toasting and hip-hipping! First, we drank your ladyship with three-times-three; then Sir Leonard, with three-times-three; then Master Frank, the future baronet, with three-times-three. And then, we drank the Lyle family in connexion with the shire, with nine-times-nine, hip, hip, hooray, and one cheer more."

"The candidate is much obliged to you."

"I wish he'd come; they're bawling for him lustily."

"You've seen his Grace?"

"Look, as your Ladyship speaks, he's here!"

Yes, there he is, coming along the sward, with Boggs and the committee, some of the gentlemen being excited and rather uproarious. As Diana lifts her eyes towards the belfry, it is seven minutes past four. Grough may have fallen asleep. "How fortunate!" she says to herself, rising to meet his Grace.

"My dear, your fortune crowns us all."

"Your Grace's most obedient servant," answers Diana, with a formal sweep of courtesy, in which his Grace observes no trace of her great trouble. Grough, coming out to do his duty, stops and looks: "By Jove, that woman is the deuce."

"Where is the runaway?" asks his Grace, with an amused, yet puzzled air. "Peers never interfere, you know, Diana; but these gentlemen—excuse them, they are country-bred—suppose because I am your—how do you call it—agnate——?"

"Say, our cousin?" she suggests.

"Our cousin, that is right,—the cousin of our May-day Queen! These gentlemen, because your majesty addresses me as cousin, fancy we must know where you have hidden their candidate."

"Gentlemen, what would you have me do? Ride, run, dance, drive, talk—what have I left undone?"

"We want some news of him, my lady," puts in Boggs.

"Good Sir, our skirts are not the cover of your game," she answers with a sweep and swing of her white robe.

"Bravo!" his Grace observes to Boggs; "that's the old manner; she must have learnt that manner in the nursery. She reminds me of her sainted majesty, Queen Charlotte, my most gracious mistress."

Grough stands on the balcony, consulting his watch. Finding that the time is ten minutes past four, he hurries down the staircase, and salutes the Duke.

"Ah, Grough! How do? What news?"

"I have a message for your Grace."

"Excuse me, Mr. Grough," Diana interposes, passing in between them, and putting her hand within the bend of his Grace's arm, "another time. We are engaged."

CHAPTER VII.

A Sail.

GROUGH hems and sulks as Lady Lyle sweeps on, her supple figure bending like a palm, her golden coil of tresses burning like a sun. He marks her easy and audacious motions as she leads his Grace along the winding pathway to the look-out. Grough feels beaten, and his gall explodes. But what is he to do? The Duke is taken by her arts. These gentlemen would resent his lightest word against her. Leonard engaged him to be gentle, and his feeling as a stoic must be guided by his interests as a man of business. At such a time, and in such a place, it would be hardly safe to outrage Lady Lyle.

Apart from his resentment on being pushed aside when he was going to do his duty, the attorney has no wish to injure and annoy her. He is sorry for her, thinking her a fine woman, who only needed honest birth and free condition to have been a credit to the Lyles. But he is vexed; and though she turns her back on him, she is aware that he is bent on mischief.

The knoll being steep, Diana leads the Duke by an easier and longer path than that in front. The time being past, she drops and dawdles in her walk, teasing the old gentleman into prattle, and replying to his badinage in the gayest spirits she can assume.

"When we arrive at the flag, your Grace must help me to explore the sea."

"For what, my dear?"

"To see the wind and seize the foam."

"How, if it please your May-day majesty?"

"Your Grace must lend me an extra pair of eyes."

Looking her archly and yet demurely in the face, he says, in the old manner, "They are dazzled by excess of light;" repeating one of the many compliments which were paid by young men of middle age to the beautiful duchess of St. James's forty-five years ago.

Diana sighs into a burst of sunny laughter. "We must shade the sun, and mitigate his fire." And so she covers up her face with a black fan, and laughs the more.

His Grace runs up the path, and gains a bench on the top, where he sits down and joins in her merriment. The presence of this woman always makes him young.

"My dear," he says; "when I grow young enough to be a fool and run after lovely faces, I entreat you to accept me as a friend."

"And in the quality you affect?"

"Of course."

"Why so?"

"Because, if you accept me as a fool, and make a friend of me, I may grow better and not worse. If you will only have me as a lover, I shall be miserable and remain an ass."

"That woman's tickling him," thinks Grough, in rather an admiring mood.

Diana, looking seaward, gives a leap, and springing to the highest point, rings out in clear, sharp tones, "The yacht!"

"Whose yacht?" demands his Grace, supposing her to be still in sport.

"Here, close in shore. Even while I was looking far away, they suddenly leapt out—masts, funnel, hull

—from a white cloud. It is the *Foam*! I say it is the *Foam*! You think I can be wrong about a yacht in which I spent three years?"

"There is a yacht in the roadstead, sure enough."

"Give me your hand. We will go down and see. It is the *Foam*, and Leonard is on board. Let us prepare to greet our prodigal."

"We'll give it him, my dear, for running off."

"That's what we ought to do."

"Yes," responds the Duke, "that's what we ought to do, and won't. When a boy comes late to school, you whip him; when he runs away, you coax him back, make feasts for him, and kill your fatted calf."

As they descend into the garden, Lady Lyle orders a servant to run up the signal flag; and as she passes near to Grough, she whispers in his ear, a sharpened accent in her words, "You need not trouble yourself about our message to his Grace."

Like a scratched horse in a race, like an unwanted actor in a drama, Grough feels pushed aside. He moves apart, having nothing more to do; half hidden by the clumps of bay and laurel, and by the masses of rose-trees now in bloom.

Diana walks a little way towards the gate, where Boggs and other gentlemen join his Grace, and start for the committee-room, at which the final polls must soon be known. On quitting them with a nod, she hastens across the garden towards the spiral stair, and is about to run into her room, when she observes the figure of General Cridge coming up from the port, and emerging through the copse. She turns and runs to him. "What news?"

"Bad news, my child."

"He is unwell?"

"Nay; it is not Sir Leonard this time."

"Who then, Uncle John?"

"My dear, it's Simon Slokk."

"What has he done?"

"Gone overboard."

"He is not dead?"

"Yes; by an accident; by a collision in the night."

"You've heard this news from Leonard?"

"No; Sir Leonard's seized by his committee and compelled to go with them. I met the bo'son near the jetty, and he told me how the rascal lived and died. The villain died too soon. Sir Leonard will be here ere we have time to look our situation in the face. You see how things are changed?"

"I am a little dazed."

"If we had got that rascal safe within the Tombs, we should have had the power to test your theory, my child. If he had papers on his person, we should have been able to seize them. Had he lodged them with a comrade, we should have been able to trace them. Now, if he had papers with him, three hundred fathoms of salt water roll above our evidence. If they are hidden in New York, they will be difficult to find."

"Then neither you nor he will ever think me what I am: a woman of free and unstained birth?"

"Nobody can believe that tale, my child. In your own self, you are as good as any living woman. It is not from me and mine that you will be reproached for any such stuff as taint of birth. We love you for yourself."

"Take me, Uncle John; take me to Niagara Falls. I shall be glad to sleep once more within the circle of that music."

"You will leave your rank as Lady Lyle behind you?"

"It is better to be my own true self than even to be Lady Lyle."

"Spoken like my child. And you will go with me again into the world?"

"I'll go with you for ever into peace."

"A second time! How soon can you be ready for the flight?"

"As soon as I am free. One pang, and I am gone."

A rustle in the bush attracts Diana's ears. She turns and notices her husband's man of business. He is standing in the shade, and very much depressed. Grough is afraid of her; feeling that he has not done his duty tenderly; and that he has made an enemy, where it would be well that he should have a friend. He is mistaken in her once again. Going back to him, she puts her hand out, saying in her old frank voice, "You love my husband, so you are my friend. Shake hands!"

"My lady!" — Grough begins to stammer his excuses.

"Hish!" she interposes. "Take no thought for me. To be his friend is to be mine. I shall remember nothing in this day's affair, but that you loved Sir Leonard as a father loves his son."

CHAPTER VIII.

Music.

A MAN enters the garden from the stable-yard. His step is quick, but something causes him to stop.

The man is Leonard; and the thing that stops him is a song. The singers are some little boys and girls.

"Heigho! that was her mother's song!"

Bessie has rallied the children to a nook in rear of Rupert's tower, where they can sing without being seen.

On landing from his launch, Leonard was greeted with shouts and cheers by the whole population of Port Lyle, especially by the women, who swarmed about him, shaking hands, wishing him good health and long life.

"Well, ye be looking bonny, Sir Leonard, and won't her ladyship be proud to have ye home again?" an old woman called to him as he elbowed through the crowd. And then he heard from them such hints about her ladyship's kindness, and her ladyship's patience, and her ladyship's bounty; and he felt in his joyous heart that every word they spoke in praise of her he loved was true.

The new rector came out to greet him; an old and quiet man, not given to overflow of speech.

"They mean it; every word of it, Sir Leonard," he observed; "and she is worthy of more praise than tongue can give her. It is by such as she that the world is kept pure and sweet."

A touch of pathos in the old man's voice arrested

Leonard's attention, causing him to slacken his speed, so that the minister might walk by his side and talk to him about the virtues of Lady Lyle.

Then he heard about her doings at the school; her teaching, painting, singing, drilling; all of which she carried on for these poor folks, in the midst of other, and, as some would think, more pressing labours. "She will have her crown," the old man said, in parting at the rectory gate; "and it will be a crown in heaven."

News of the arrival having spread, the whole county committee swarmed out of the Lyle Arms to greet their candidate. The polls were not made up, for some of the returns were late, but no one doubted their having a large majority of votes. Sir Leonard's hands were wrung until they almost bled.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sheriff," he replied to a last uproarious hug of his chairman.

"You must thank her Ladyship, Sir Leonard," answered Boggs. "She's done more than any of us. She's got in both our men. You may depend on it, we should have lost one seat, and perhaps both seats. St. Leger would have been nowhere but for her. The county, and the party, owe this victory to her Ladyship. By Jove, and we'll remind her of it—in a piece of plate."

Onward he came, desiring his friends to pardon him till he had seen his wife. In spite of the flush of welcome, both the rector and the sheriff noticed a look of care in his frank, worn face. The voyage had bronzed his cheek, but they observed a furtive and uneasy flicker in his eyes. The doctor, more familiar with his cousin, saw that things were not yet right with him, and nodded to the over-zealous members who were bent on going up with him, to remain be-

hind. So he came up alone; up through the stable-yard as being the shortest cut from his committee-room to the Lady's bower. The first sounds of home that caught his ear were the shouts of boys and girls at play. Those shouts were followed by the tap-tap of a drum. His heart leapt up within him.

"That is Frank," he said stopping short and listening. "That is Frank; dear Frank—how he will bound!"

There was a patter of small feet, as of a squad called in; a pair of hands were clapped; and a voice was heard, which Leonard recognised as Bessie's, calling for a song. As he passed the belfry clock, he caught the lilt and swell of children's voices.

Heigho! That was her mother's song!

He stops to listen, and the music sinks into his heart. The day when he first heard that even-song comes back to him in form and colour, filled with the unspent power of life. It was the day they rode to Orange Gap; the day the Senator reeled and fell; the day Diana won her race with him; the day he ate terrapin and became a friend of Virginia; the day he fought with Simon in the negro yard; the day he first heard the lying slut; the day he dreamt his dream of love; the day he all-unconsciously resolved to be her knight. What a delicious scene it was! That splendid room, so full of noble art; that splendid man, so brilliant and renowned; that splendid girl, so young, so lovely, and so bright! And what a mystery about the lady, who was never seen, and yet whose spirit seemed to rest on everything, a kind of moral moonlight! Aye, this song was hers; music and words alike. How gloriously Diana sang that night! She sang to her father, and his guest. Since then, he has not heard

that sweet and stately cadence. When they met again, they were so quickly man and wife, she had never need again to sing Good night.

He listens to the strain, his ear attentive to the notes, while memory goes back to other days and scenes. A strange, nay, marvellous woman, when he thinks of her, was that poetess, that musician. Lovely, she must have been; for Di's most striking points—the lustre of her skin, the azure in her eyes, the auburn of her tresses, are derived from other sources than the Randolph race. That race is dark, and she is very fair. Her manner must have been a lady's. Every one admits that Diana's style is faultless; and the Duke, a perfect judge of manner, says she must have learnt it in her cradle. He remembers his Grace once remarking to him in London:

“She's a thorough lady, Leonard. No girl ever bore her head like that, unless her mother were a lady born and bred.” Yet what a fate that mother's was!

Though he has asked no question as to what occurred at Riverside after his departure, he has learned from Tab's loquacity the order of events. Tab's zeal for speaking the truth—and plenty of it—has been roused by Leonard telling her that a lie might be conveyed without a word, and that an honest woman should not only tell the truth, but the whole truth. When, therefore, she began to talk, she could not easily be stopped. She told him everything. Assured that Madam was in fact her mistress, Tab was proud of her as a family connexion, dwelling on her accomplishments of voice and person as the niece of a duchess doats on the virtues of her aunt.

“They're coming to an end,” says Leonard, listening to the musical effects. “That note is near the

end. Now, we shall have the romps and shouts. How red those roses burn! Lovely, aye, lovely—every part—house, garden, park! It is Frank's birthday. Seven years old! He is a little man now. There, the song is done. The urchins are at play. What peace, what beauty, where she reigns! I'll see her now. I'll claim my own. I'll have my last fear swept away. I'll ask her, face to face, what mystery of guilt it was that she confessed? A guilty wretch! Guilty of what—my wife?"

CHAPTER IX.

The Lady's Bower.

IN running up the spiral stair, Leonard encounters Di, coming out on the balcony of her room, attired as for a journey in hat and cloak. She is signalling to Bessie, adding to her wave of hand, in a low undertone:

"Quick, girl, my time is come."

"Your time of flight?" he interposes.

"My time of freedom, Leonard. I have done your bidding. If one kingdom cannot hold us, you must let me go."

"Excuse me, if I bar the way."

He takes her by the hand and leads her back into the room, closes the window-valves, seats her on a chair, goes into the ante-room, and having locked the outer door, returns and takes the opposite chair.

"I have the ring," he says.

Rising from her chair she flings her arms up in surprise and joy.

"The papers also, Di."

She looks at him, her great blue eyes aglow with light. An instant more and she is on her knees, kissing his hands in a wild ecstasy of bliss.

"Get up, Di. Here's your mother's ring, a famous ring of old Italian workmanship. You know the posy of this ring?"

"Know it! Yes, Leonard, for the words are burnt into my brain:

"FRANK TO HIS WIFE, DIANA RANDOLPH."

"Right, Di. It was your mother's ring?"

Diana turns it over, kisses it, and answers:

"Yes. It was my mother's, stolen from her dead finger."

"And you hardly know by whom?"

"No, Leonard. I suppose by Slokk."

"If he were not the thief, would you like to know who was?"

"I should, for I could wither him with a curse——
Nay, it is better that I should not learn. My curse will do the dead no good. No, Leonard, I will let it die. If you are satisfied, I am content."

He takes the hoop, reads the words on it once more, and after pressing it to his mouth, slips it on the third finger of her left hand without a word.

Seating her in the chair once more, he next unfolds the family documents, one by one, and pushes them in due order of date, across the table, so that she may read each word and line with her own eyes, without the shame—if, in her fancy, there is any shame—of hearing the story told in any other voice.

She reads the documents one by one. It is the first time she has seen that bill of sale, by which her father's father, John Randolph, sold her mother's mother, Tabitha Crump, for so much money—twelve hundred dollars down! It is the first time she has seen that letter of freedom by which her mother's father, Edward Wingfield, raised her mother's mother from the condition of a chattel into that of a citizen.

The other papers she has seen; the names, dates, contents, are familiar to her mind. But she goes through them in a staid and waiting mood, conscious that the end, if near, is not yet reached. There may be many rocks ahead. She waits for him to speak.

"These are the papers that were lost?"

"They are," she answers him, and waits.

"The whole of them?"

"I think so."

"And the facts they certify are true?"

"Quite true," is her assent.

"And you are satisfied with what is here adduced and proved?"

"Perfectly satisfied."

"Excuse the plainness of my words. Your mother seems to have been a lady of high gifts and of extraordinary beauty. That is evidenced in many ways. But she was, also, as it now appears, a free-born woman?"

"Yes."

"And, as it also now appears, she was Senator Randolph's wife?"

"She was; the fact needs no certificate; but this certificate is signed."

"In God's name, then, why, darling, have you called yourself a guilty wretch?"

Springing to her feet, and towering in her height, Diana flashes out—

"I owned my guilt, because I stood before your faithful, unsuspecting eyes, a guilty and repentant wretch."

"Guilty in what? Sit down; be calm, my love; and tell me all. Guilty in what?"

"In silence; in a daily silence. I deceived you, Leonard."

"As to what?"

"My taint of blood."

"I see in you no taint. The daughter of Frank Randolph, born in honour and respect, needs no certificate of blood."

"I sinned against you, Leonard, in that silence; but you will believe me, when I say that it was done in ignorance and not in malice."

"I can see no sin, Di."

"Leonard, I have sinned and fallen; but I sinned in what appeared to be my duty, and I fell through over-mastering love. Hear me and judge."

"What would you have me judge?"

"My case and yours. My mother, in her dying moments, charged me, as a sacrament, to keep the secret of her taint. I took that duty on myself, and looked it daily in the face, as something to be done without a thought. When I took refuge at Niagara Falls, that duty was renewed to me. If there is any saint in heaven, the woman who renewed that pledge to me is there. She meant the best. That woman fed, taught, loved me, lifted me up, and made me what I am."

Leonard resolves to take that woman for his saint.

"She asked my pledge that I would keep the secret of my mother's birth. I proudly gave that pledge, not knowing it was wrong."

"And bravely kept it, Di!"

"Leonard, I kept my pledge and lost your heart."

"No! never, Di! The cloud is scattered! To my arms!"

"But one word more, and I have done. I was an

artist, living in my art. I could have spent my power, and found my recompense in my own craft. You came to me; the artist slept; the woman woke."

"My love!"

"Until that moment I had lived in peace. My mother's secret was at rest. Nature had kept it. Why should I betray her trust?"

"You did the right thing, Di."

"You came to me—proud, benignant, brave! You cheered me on; gave spirit to my brain, and colour to my life. Your passion dazed me. I was mad with love. I should have broken with those saints in heaven, flung my black secret in your face, and driven you from my sight!"

"No, No!"

"I should have done all that, and more. Before a love so grand as yours, I should have broken every seal, and violated every grave. I could not, Leonard! I was weak; and in my weakness sinned and fell."

"You shall not say that, Di!"

"Before you cast me out, think, Leonard, how the fire of such a love as yours must burn into a woman's eyes! You loved me! How could I resist that love? I sinned against you; yet within your heart of hearts, you know I only sinned through love."

"My wife!"

"My husband!"

They are folded in each other's arms.

CHAPTER X.

Victory.

A ROAR and clatter in the garden rouses Leonard and Diana from their long and happy dream. Leonard goes to the window, turns the hasp, and throws the valves open. Frank is heard below, his tap-tap answering to a bigger drum in the road, coming up from the fishing town. A crowd of people swarm about the grounds, for polling day is everybody's day, and folks are streaming in from every side to cheer the new county member and taste the new county member's ale. The Yorkshire brew is stiff, and the cellars of Castle Lyle are worthy of the shire.

The belfry clock strikes five. The sheriff will be coming up. By this time, he has got the last returns. Yes, there's Grough in the shrubbery. And who's that chasing Frank? St. Leger! How the boy seems to like him! Ha, St. Leger's catching up Frank and carrying him on his shoulder.

"Di!" calls Leonard, turning round to seek his wife. Diana is standing close behind him, trembling in her joy. An instant and they are folded, as before, in each other's arms.

"My wife!"

"Yes, love?"

"The cloud is rent, the storm is past. Again, heaven will be bright, earth lovely in our eyes."

"Leonard!"

"I could clasp thee, Di, until the end of time."

"Husband!"

"Now, run, Di; change this robe; and let us look as though we were at home. I must go down to them. Come to me, darling, in the garden."

In running down the spiral staircase, Leonard encounters General Cridge. The two men grasp each other's hands, but with a difference in the motive. Cridge's harder touch inquires for fatal news, while Leonard's warmer clasp announces victory. The Black Republican starts.

"What news, Sir Leonard? I am aware that Slokk is drowned."

"The papers are secured. It is no dream. The story told by Di is true in substance and in detail. Every point is now cleared up, and there is not a happier pair alive than Leonard and Diana Lyle."

Here Grough comes out into the open. He is rather puzzled and crest-fallen since Diana's greeting; for his stoical opinions and professional habits, though hardening him against railing tongues and bitter hearts, offer him no defence against a gentle voice and a forgiving spirit. He is ashamed of meeting Leonard.

"Ah! You there, Grough? Have you seen his Grace? Have you delivered my letter?"

"No."

"A thousand thanks. You are the best attorney ever man employed. Your caution has preserved me from a great annoyance. Things are right again with me. She is a noble woman, Grough."

"Noble, Sir Leonard? If there were any such things as angels, she'd be one of them."

A signal to the yacht has brought up Cox and some of the sea-dogs, along with Joe and the quadroon. Bessie is with them, chatting with the coloured woman, apparently on friendly terms. On catching a glimpse of the *Foam*, Bessie, whose banns have all been read in church, ran down to the beach, where her young man was looking for a draper's shop. Bessie, on learning how matters stood, assisted them, and so a length of crape was added by way of scarf to the quadroon's attire.

"Bessie, my girl," says Leonard, holding her hand in his, almost like an elder brother, "we'll have that wedding in the church on Sunday morning,—and your lady means to give you the best tenement on our estate."

"The Lyle Arms, Sir Leonard?" she inquires, with a rustic curtsy.

"Joe's put you up to that; eh, Bessie?"

"Yes, Sir Leonard."

"Well, her Ladyship shall decide. You've done your best for her, and she will do her best for you. Are you content to leave it in her hands?"

"Sir Leonard, I would leave my life in my Lady's hands."

Tab, whose eyes are fixed on the balcony leading to Diana's room, lifts up her fore-finger, as a sign for them to look that way. There, on the balcony, coming out, stands for an instant Lady Lyle; her figure robed in white, a crimson sash about her waist, a golden fillet round her tawny hair, a radiant glow on her youthful face. A cry of wonder and delight breaks out, and broadens to a cheer, as she descends the stair.

Quick as a thought, Leonard is in the bushes, clutching at the fairest rose, and in another second he is at her side, one hand about her waist, the other busy with that fold in the white robe in which his rose was wont to nestle.

"Look," he whispers, leading her towards Tab, "here is a penitent."

Tab flings herself in a frenzy of passion at Diana's feet.

"Strike me—spurn me!"

"Hence! Thy blood protects thee. Get thee gone!" says Lady Lyle, with a majestic air and tone.

"Kill me, Diana!"

"Rise. Begone."

"I'll die; but I will not begone till you forgive my crimes."

"Justice is swift and stern. Begone!"

"Forgive her, Di. She is a penitent."

"Oh, sacred saint, look down on me, thy child! Judge her—and me! Leonard, if she were changed in heart——"

"I answer; she is penitent. For my sake, Di?"

"In your name, Leonard, I forgive her. There—my hand."

Tab touches the hand held out to her, and is about to kiss it, when a rush of feeling seems to stay her act. Dropping her face to the ground, she cowers at Diana's feet, fumbles at the edge of her robe, and presses the hem of that garment to her lips. Diana lifts her up; looks in her eyes intently; and then adds slowly, "Yes; forgiven with all my soul."

Grough turns aside from the group, but catching Sir Leonard's eye, he growls out audibly,—

"I'm a pervert. I believe in angels after all."

But Grough's confusion of face is covered by the arrival of the county committee, headed by Sheriff Boggs, and followed by the Duke.

"Head of the poll; majority of seventeen hundred and fifty votes!" shouts Boggs.

"My dear," exclaims his Grace, "your prophecies have all come true."

Boggs struggles to a bench, and calls the group of gentlemen to order.

"Gentlemen, we have won the fight. Three cheers for our new members, Sir Leonard Lyle and Lord St. Leger!"

The cheers are given, and Lord St. Leger, to the vast delight of Frank, replies with a piercing chaunt of "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Three times three for our great electress, Lady Lyle!"

The cheers are given, with one cheer more, and then the band strikes up, "The Conquering Hero comes." As the last notes die off, the Duke exclaims,—

"Hero! It's a heroine. One cheer more—Diana, Lady Lyle!"

THE END.

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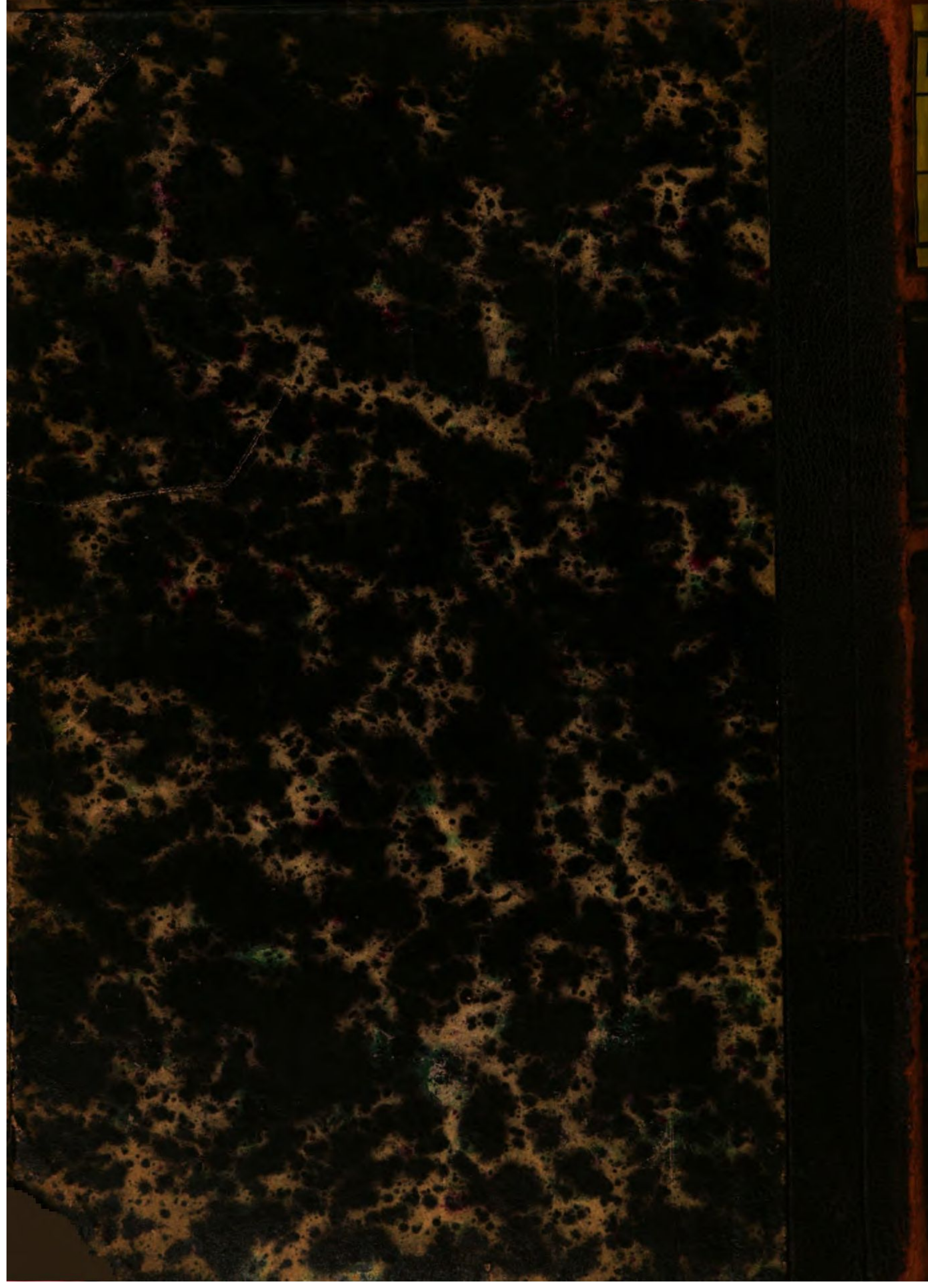
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